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# Journal of European Baptist Studies

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## Editorial

We celebrate the launch of volume twelve of this Journal with contributions from three of our distinguished academics at IBTS. Professor John Briggs has a distinguished academic career as a historian concentrating on the nineteenth century, together with a long-time involvement representing Baptists within the inner sanctum of the World Council of Churches. Course Leader in Contextual Missiology, Tim Noble, served the church as a missionary in Brazil before engaging in the work of theological education in Europe, and Derek Murray, a research degree supervisor, crowned a vocation as a local pastor with ground breaking work in hospital chaplaincy, before offering his expertise in history to post-graduate students.

Each explores a profound concern of our community in Prague. One of the great challenges facing Baptist communities in Europe and the Middle East is the relationship between the Orthodox Churches and baptistic communities, which is fraught with difficulties. The Orthodox churches see in Baptists activities they often regard as proselytism. Baptist churches across our region see national Orthodox communities as seeking to deny freedom of belief and worship. At IBTS we believe a vital necessity for our age is dialogue and understanding between Orthodox and Baptist Christian world communions. Anticipating a meeting at global level between Orthodox and Baptists this autumn in Crete, we offer Professor Briggs' account of dialogue undertaken between Orthodox and the wider evangelical churches within the context of the World Council of Churches.

Tim Noble addresses another concern – that of the life of the believer as a disciple developing an authentic and sustainable spirituality. In a fascinating piece of research he explores *The Way of the Pilgrim* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, two books from Orthodox and baptistic backgrounds which seek to promote the journey of personal discipleship.

Derek Murray looks into the life of one man from Aberdeen in Scotland who sought to be an honest disciple of Christ and to make a difference amongst his family, friends and pupils. This is a reminder that the Church of Jesus Christ is not built only from doctrinal positions and by denominations, but brick by brick in the lives of sincere believers seeking to work out their faith in a complex and fallen world.

**The Revd Dr Keith G Jones**  
Rector, IBTS

## Evangelicals and Orthodox

John Briggs

*The following lecture was given by Professor Briggs as the opening address at the August 2010 meeting of The Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, a society which seeks to encourage relationship and understanding between Anglicans and Orthodox.*

### Canberra 1991

Doubtless this topic has a longer history than that which I can recollect, but for me the story goes back to the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Canberra in February 1991,<sup>1</sup> and an address by a young female Korean theologian, Professor Chung Hyun Kyung, speaking to the Assembly theme, 'Come Holy Spirit: Renew the Whole Creation'. She had been paired with Patriarch Parthenios III of Alexandria and All Africa, who unfortunately could not attend at the last moment because of the war in the Persian Gulf, and as a consequence his address had to be read in his absence by my good friend, Grand Protopresbyter Georges Tsetsis. Reading somebody else's text is never as compelling as a live presentation; Patriarch Parthenios' reflections on the work of the Holy Spirit were profound but lacked the force of his lively presence.

Accordingly, there was a measure of theatre when Professor Kyung made her entry replete with dancers, exotic musicians and candles.<sup>2</sup> For her exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit, the Korean professor used images from Shamanism and Buddhism and reflected on the witness of the ancestors, not to mention appeals to a fairly strident feminism, as a repeated point of reference.<sup>3</sup> In the following discussion a number of Orthodox delegates voiced their unhappiness at the ambiguities of her presentation, not at some peripheral session, but in a keynote address. Later a number of Evangelicals present, led by Oberkirchenrat Walter Arnold of the Lutheran Church in Württemberg, indicated that they did not think that the Orthodox should have to voice such disquiet on their own, for the offence given was felt by a much wider number of delegates.

<sup>1</sup> For example, in the early 1980s Metropolitan Anthony Bloom met with the leaders of the Evangelical Alliance in England to discuss mutual concerns but no report was apparently produced. T. Grass (ed.), *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church* (Milton Keynes: Acute [Paternoster], 2001), p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit: the Official Report of the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches [Canberra 1991]* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), pp. 14-16, 27-47.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Kinnamon, 'Assessing the Ecumenical Movement' in John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Georges Tsetsis (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3* (Geneva: WCC, 2004), p. 61.

At the end of the Assembly both groups presented reflections. In their document the Orthodox enumerated a number of disquiets – for example, an apparent increasing departure by WCC programmes from the basis of the Council, ‘We miss from many WCC documents the affirmation that Jesus Christ is the world’s Saviour’, they complained, continuing by noting ‘a growing departure from Biblically-based understandings’ of essential doctrines. And then, particularly relating to Professor Kyung’s presentation, came the warning: ‘We must guard against a tendency to substitute a private spirit, the spirit of the world or other spirits for the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son.’<sup>4</sup>

In a letter from Evangelical participants, which acknowledged ‘many common theological commitments and concerns with the Orthodox’, it is recorded, ‘As the Assembly discussed the process of listening to the Spirit at work in every culture, we cautioned, with others, that discernment is required to identify the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ and thus to develop criteria for and limits to theological diversity.’ Similarly they argued for a high Christology ‘as the only authentic Christian base for dialogue with persons of other living faiths.’ Speaking more directly of syncretism, it confessed, ‘we cannot address the charge of syncretism to the religious experiences of people of the two-thirds world without at the same time examining afresh the degree to which Christianity in the Western world has easily assimilated aspects of its own culture such as rationalism and individualism.’<sup>5</sup> That is to say, evangelicals recognised that the churches of the south did not have a monopoly on syncretism – that all culturally embedded theologies were vulnerable in this area, that syncretism is, in fact, the pathology of contextualisation. Nevertheless, at Alexandria, Orthodox and Evangelicals jointly spoke out against ‘that syncretism in dialogue with the world religions which so affirms salvific universalism that it denies the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ and the uniqueness of Christian revelation’.<sup>6</sup>

## Orthodox – Evangelical Conversations, 1993-8

After the Assembly, Oberkirchenrat Walter Arnold, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, and others met with Orthodox leaders in Istanbul, the outcome of which was three consultations organised by the WCC. The first was in Stuttgart in 1993, the second in Alexandria in 1995 and the third in Hamburg in 1998, at all of which I was privileged to be

<sup>4</sup> ‘Reflections of Orthodox Participants’, in Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit*, pp. 279-282.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Evangelical Perspectives from Canberra’, in Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit*, pp. 282-286.

<sup>6</sup> H. van Beek and G. Lemopoulos (eds.), *Proclaiming Christ Today: the Orthodox-Evangelical Consultation, Alexandria, July, 1995* (Geneva: WCC, 1997), p. 51.

present. Such talks were only a small part of a larger scene involving a number of Bilateral Conversations between different ecclesiastical partners, as well as the important multi-lateral activity of theological exploration focused in the Faith and Order Commission.<sup>7</sup> Added to these has been the later work of the Special Commission on the Participation of the Orthodoxy in the World Council of Churches, 1998-2002, on which I was glad to serve, and indeed, with Professor Constantine Scouteris of Athens, to draft its final report.<sup>8</sup>

The task of the Orthodox-Evangelical conversations was to explore ‘concerns that are common to Orthodox and Evangelicals for the good of the ecumenical movement, with the aim of strengthening Orthodox-Evangelical understanding on vital issues and joining hands for the welfare of the WCC and its member churches’. At the Stuttgart meeting the Orthodox side of the dialogue was represented only by representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate but at Alexandria and Hamburg there was full representation from some twelve Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches, whilst the evangelical representatives came from both mainstream protestant denominations and from some independently-instituted churches.<sup>9</sup>

There was an inevitable unevenness about the representation for, whilst orthodox colleagues came from particular canonical jurisdictions, the evangelicals in the conversations represented a movement within their several churches, not necessarily a whole church. Indeed the churches from which members came were quite different: some had a spectrum of beliefs, for example from catholic to evangelical, as in the case of the Anglican Church, whilst others were exclusively evangelical, thus underlining the personal rather than representative status of the participants. Neither side of the conversations were, thus, able to offer authoritative statements but rather the informed judgments of those deeply involved in the witness of their churches.

Moreover, whilst it is not difficult to talk about an orthodox ecclesiology, one can only talk about a range of evangelical ecclesiologies, in the plural – some times Episcopal, some times Presbyterian or

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<sup>7</sup> On Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogue, and on the Faith and Order Commission, see the entries under those headings in N. Lossky, J.M. Bonino, J. Pobee, T. Stansky, G. Wainwright and P. Webb (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Second Edition (Geneva: WCC, 2002), pp. 28-31; 310-1; 321-3; 461-3, 716-8, 962, 864-6. Relevant bilaterals are those with Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and Reformed for both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox [with Anglicans and Reformed only]. Explorative conversations with Baptists were held in Istanbul and Oxford but for largely administrative reasons did not proceed further at that time.

<sup>8</sup> *The Final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation, 1992* is available from the WCC, Geneva and is displayed on its website at [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org).

<sup>9</sup> Beek and Lemopoulos (eds.), *Proclaiming Christ Today*, pp. 7-8.

Connexional, some times Congregational. Moreover, nobody can speak for all Evangelicals, with the added difficulty that those who cause most anguish to Orthodox brothers and sisters by their insensitive attempts at proselytism are those least likely to belong to any evangelical corporate body, and therefore not easily influenced by other evangelicals.

Somewhat ironically it has been observed that a pattern has emerged in Orthodox - Evangelical conversations: namely, initially the sharing of 'mutual congratulations on the discovery of a convergence of interest in many areas, [which is then] followed by an appendix listing matters where further work, needs to be done'<sup>10</sup> to aid even better common understanding, and that list of topics on which further work has to be done, notwithstanding helpful meetings, never seems to become smaller. Nevertheless there were times in the conversations 'when Evangelicals sounded like Orthodox and Orthodox spoke a distinctly Evangelical language'. Again, somewhat ironically, there was talk of 'Ortho-gelicals' as such topics as the ongoing responsibility for martyria [witness] was shared with an appreciation of the witness of a suffering church over the ages, underlining a return to 'the integration of word and deed, of presence and proclamation in our [Christian] witness'. The exposition by Father Ion Bria, a treasured friend no longer with us, of the Orthodox understanding of 'the liturgy after the liturgy' was helpful, with the concept that, complementary to the gathering together of the people of God for worship of the triune God within the sanctuary, was the scattering of the faithful back into the world, there to continue the liturgy, the work of the people of God, in daily life. While the number of celebrants in the sanctuary may be limited, all believers have a priestly task to tackle in their daily witness.

Remembering that the initial reason for coming together was concerns shared by both groups about the influence in the World Council of Churches of what often seemed a foot-loose liberalism, with little sense of biblical authority or the apostolic faith of the church witnessed to in the ecumenical creeds, and too great a concern with a worldly agenda, the Alexandria meeting recorded sentiments such as:

Evangelicals learnt with great delight of some of the achievements of the evangelistic endeavours of the different Orthodox churches, appreciated the Biblical theology and the deep Christological under-girding of their current missiology, and were impressed by the signs of renewal within the Orthodox family. Orthodox members paid testimony to the emphasis given by Evangelicals to God's initiative in redemption, learnt with

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<sup>10</sup> Grass (ed.), *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church*, p. 37. In Alexandria, that common ground was recognised 'especially in the theology of mission, the centrality and authority of Scripture, and faithfulness to the apostolic faith amidst the challenge of a secularised world'. Beek and Lemopoulos (eds.), *Proclaiming Christ Today*, p. 12.



interest of the increasing respect of some evangelicals for the witness of the church throughout the ages [the continuous witness of the Holy Spirit through the people of God in every generation] and the importance of the eucharist both for nourishing mission in the world today, and for protecting the church against irresponsible appeal to any individual's isolated experience.<sup>11</sup>

## **Some Areas of Convergence**

I lay out here some of those emphases which bring Orthodox and Evangelical believers together. Partially reflecting the analysis in Dr Grass's book, I offer seven headings. The starting point can usefully be taken as:

### **1. Apostolic Doctrine**

Both Orthodox and Evangelical generally hold to the doctrinal shape of primitive Christianity as revealed in the New Testament and the writings of the early Fathers of the church. These may be summarised as affirmation of the incarnation – that Jesus, possessing both a human and divine nature, was born of the Virgin Mary, exercised a remarkable ministry in both Galilee and Judaea in which healings and other miracles had their place. That ministry led up to his sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of the world, followed by his bodily resurrection and appearance to different groups of disciples before his ascension into heaven, prior to the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. Both groups are Trinitarian and rigorously defend a high Christology.

### **2. Biblical Authority**

At a reception given by the head of the Coptic Church, Pope Shenouda III, the Pope, who has himself written widely in a simple manner to expound the meaning of the Scriptures for the Coptic faithful, affirmed their dependence on the Bible, on which basis he said he was happy to join together with Evangelicals. Indeed, because of this, the whole emphasis of his writings finds immediate empathy amongst Evangelicals. Whilst he became a President of the WCC at Canberra, there was tension in his relationship with the Council concerning what he saw as a number of unbiblical emphases, though partly I think also because of the failure of the whole body to give full respect to his ecclesial status.

Both Orthodox and Evangelical affirm that Scripture is the Word of God which the document 'Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church'

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<sup>11</sup> Beek and Lemopoulos (eds.), *Proclaiming Christ Today*, p. 12.

illustrates by expounding the Catechism of the Russian theologian, St Philaret of Moscow, who both testifies to the authority of Scripture and identifies its separate parts and the distinctive testimony that they bear. Whilst orthodoxy has not engaged in extensive systematic exposition of the relationship between revelation and the Scriptures, the rich dependency of the liturgy on biblical sources tells its own story. However, for the Orthodox, ‘interpretation of Holy Scripture was to take place only in, by and with the church and not, for instance, against the church’.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. The Nature of God

Both traditions ‘resist reductionist views of God which identify him solely and exhaustively with the “ground of our human being” that is, the deepest dimension of this-worldly existence’<sup>13</sup> God is the uncreated creator of the universe who sustains the world in all its being. To use Orthodox language describing the second person of the Trinity he is to be worshipped as Pantokrator, the Almighty, the ruler of the universe. Discipleship travels from this understanding of God to the world and not vice versa. Contrary to the emphasis of some, the world does not, in any simple way, write the agenda for the Church. Both traditions would affirm that ‘The cosmos gains its life and meaning only from its divine Creator, who will one day renew it eternally in the new heavens and the new earth.... Nor are God’s being and activity wholly confined to this world; God is related to this world and its history not only as everywhere-and-always present [immanent] but as apart from and above it [transcendent], reigning in heaven where his will is perfectly fulfilled.’<sup>14</sup>

### 4. Proclaiming Christ Today

This was the theme for the Alexandria Consultation and it was immediately recognised that there was common interest ‘especially in the theology of mission, the centrality and authority of Scripture, and faithfulness to the apostolic faith amidst the challenge of a secularised world’. It was further confessed: ‘Together we came to recognize our need to be open to the continuing work of the triune God in our witness in and to our particular contexts’. Both sides agreed that authentic mission had to follow the pattern of mission modelled in the life of Jesus – thus it was to be characterised by being ‘costly, vulnerable to human rejection, holistic and always majoring on love’. ‘Mission in Christ’s own way’ can certainly never be arrogant,

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<sup>12</sup> Viorel Ionita, ‘Discussions between Orthodox and Evangelicals at the level of CEC’ in H. van Beek and G. Lemopoulos (eds.), *Turn to God, Rejoice in Hope: Orthodox-Evangelical Consultation, April 1998* (Geneva: WCC, 1999), p. 67.

<sup>13</sup> Grass (ed.), *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

bombastic or aggressive, exploiting the external power of rich external funds, as appears to be the case with some sectarian endeavours.

The message of the consultation argued that mission starts with our personal response to the call of God: 'The Living Word of God is never external, unrelational, disconnected, but always calling for personal conversion and relational communion' since faith involves more than intellectual assent: it is a truth to be participated in. Such a conversion is more than appropriation of a message: it is a commitment to Jesus Christ, imitating his death and resurrection in a very visible and tangible way. That which begins with a personal commitment must, however, immediately lead into a relationship with other members of the Body of Christ, the local witnessing community.'<sup>15</sup>

An area for debate was 'the extent to which the proclamation of Christ was implicit within the witness of the faithful regularly celebrating the liturgy week by week, especially in times of persecution, and the extent to which it was necessary to add to this, explicit testimony to the good news in Jesus Christ in ways that extend beyond the liturgy and spell out the demands of the gospel in the contemporary world.'<sup>16</sup>

## **5. Christ Coming Again in Glory to Judge the Living and the Dead [Nicene Creed]**

Repeated Sunday by Sunday in the Liturgy as an item of faith, not all who use the words assent to their content, but Evangelicals and Orthodox most certainly do, along with affirmations of the 'resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come'. This is not just an affirmation that history is moving forward to a goal that has been determined by God. Nor is it just hope for the bodily resurrection of the individual Christian, but a recognition of the consummation of all things in Christ at the end of the ages. 'Orthodoxy has a strong grasp on the interconnectedness of the whole cosmos, arising from its belief in the Spirit as "everywhere present and filling all things", and hence tends towards a more cosmic view of redemption in which the whole created order [not merely humanity] is restored to perfection [though] such a view is also becoming increasingly popular in evangelical circles.'<sup>17</sup>

## **6. Prayer and Spirituality**

Addressing the Alexandria Consultation, Father Ion Bria observed to Evangelical satisfaction: 'At this time when considerations about

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<sup>15</sup> Beek and Lemopoulos (eds.), *Proclaiming Christ Today*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Grass (ed.), *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church*, p. 32.

economics, politics, environment, and sexuality have become the prime interest of our societies somebody has to speak about matters of faith and ethics, mission and evangelism, worship and spirituality'.<sup>18</sup> Common ground is found in the shared conviction, not joyously endorsed by all church traditions in the twenty-first century, that access by the Spirit into a transcendent realm of experience is a present possibility. Both agree that 'men and women are called to experience regeneration, rebirth into participation in the life of God himself, through the Holy Spirit. This is an anticipation of heaven itself, and may be spoken of as "a new creation"'.<sup>19</sup> At the same time spirituality concerns living out the credal affirmations made in the liturgy. Lossky writes of mystical theology as 'a spirituality which expresses a doctrinal attitude',<sup>20</sup> whilst on the evangelical side James Gordon defines spirituality as 'doctrine prayed, experienced and lived in a life of committed obedience to Christ'.<sup>21</sup> Evangelicals share Orthodox understandings of discipleship as human life incorporated into Christ. In practice, the Orthodox may lay more overt emphasis on spirituality being based in the sacraments and the life of the church within the set disciplines of liturgical requirements. By contrast Evangelicals embrace a greater freedom in shaping their worship, but underpinning it are the same gospel affirmations reflected in the Orthodox liturgy. The language of 'prayer in the heart', and of the Jesus Prayer, accords well with evangelical convictions and piety. Evangelicals listen sympathetically to Orthodox affirmations about the Liturgy: 'The liturgy was the most solid and viable pillar of resistance during centuries of restrictions, foreign dominations and persecution. It was the liturgical assembly, the communion sanctorum, discreet in its institutional visibility, which became a symbolic community during the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Liturgical worship has kept the Church alive in spite of oppression.'<sup>22</sup>

Three further areas perhaps require some comment:

## 1. The Orthodox and the WCC

As principal author of the report of the Special Commission<sup>23</sup> I should perhaps say a little about its work. Originating with disquiet at the Harare Assembly in 1998, the Commission was set up, embracing equal numbers

<sup>18</sup> Ion Bria, 'Proclaiming Christ Today' in Beek and Lemopoulos (eds.), *Proclaiming Christ Today*, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Grass (ed.) *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 130-131, citing Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Orthodox Church* (James Clarke, 1957), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> James Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (SPCK, 1991), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Bria, 'Proclaiming Christ Today', p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> *The Final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC* was accepted by the Central Committee of the WCC in September 2002 and can be found on the Council's website [www.oikoumene.org]. Quotations in this section are taken from the report.

of Orthodox and Non-orthodox [a very awkward category] to look at an agenda of Orthodox concerns.

Basically, these may be summarised as:

- the problems of being in a permanent minority;
- diverging understandings of ministry and worship focused in such things as the ordination of women and the use of inclusive language to describe the Godhead, especially the deployment of alternative language to that of Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- threats to the autonomy of member churches seen in pressures upon them to make up delegations conforming to World Council norms for the participation of lay, female and young delegates;
- Orthodox discomfort at the possibility of the World Council engaging in discussion on issues of human sexuality;
- the employment of forms of worship which allegedly incorporated elements of syncretism;
- the problems of new member churches, both as emphasising further Orthodoxy's minority position, coupled with uncertainty as to the faith and practice of new member churches not belonging to one of the established Christian World Communions, in particular independently founded African churches.

As the Special Commission began its work, it became clear that a separate study group was necessary to explore issues relating to membership categories and processes. Since I had drafted the part of the Common Understanding and Vision document dealing with such issues I was asked to moderate that group, whose report was later included within that of the Special Commission.

As indicated above, one of the problems for the Orthodox is the contemplation of an ever-expanding World Council in which the Orthodox have very little opportunity to expand significantly. Whereas since 1948 overall membership has grown from c150 to c350 churches, Orthodox membership has only grown from five to twenty-one churches, or probably rather less with Georgian and Bulgarian withdrawals, with little capacity for further growth, leaving the Orthodox in the position of a permanent minority, notwithstanding the fact that the numbers of the faithful represent a rather different reality.

There is, of course, Orthodox expansion, for example, in Africa, but little opportunity to expand jurisdictions, so growing churches in East Africa would all come under the patriarchate of Alexandria. In the Middle

East Council of Churches, the problem is solved by voting as church families: Roman Catholic, Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Evangelical/Protestant [including Anglican], but persuading all the non-Orthodox churches in the World Council that they were ‘protestant’ was a non-starter – just think of the range: Anglicans, Old Catholics, Pentecostal, African Independent, etc.

The Commission therefore sought to address this by suggesting that the Council move away from deciding issues by counting votes to a consensus model of decision making, in which process the size of a church’s delegation would be less important. Rather than working to a parliamentary model built upon adversarial assumptions of being for or against a particular proposition, in the consensus methodology patient exploration is made to discern the mind of the assembly. Vital parts of the procedure are respect for minorities, including incorporating an expression of their concerns if so requested. Decisions on social and ethical issues need to be made by the consensus method at every stage of procedure, not just at the final step of decision-making, so, for example, consensus needs to be secured when establishing agendas, when deciding what kind of investigation is to be undertaken, and then the methods to be deployed in handling the subject, and finally when and whether the process shall be put in the public domain. The methodology should be sensitive enough to help churches realise which matters are best kept to their own counsels and not imposed on WCC agendas [e.g. possibly issues of sexuality and ministry]. By contrast, other matters may routinely be decided by vote, e.g. the acceptance of a budget. Overall it is important that decision-making should unite and not divide the body.

To try and help some Orthodox as well as some Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, revised terms of membership were agreed in terms of introducing two ways of relating to the WCC:

- i. Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC. This would be the language for all committed members regardless of size.
- ii. Churches in Association with the WCC. Such churches would pay no subscription, with the consequence that financial subsidies would not be offered to assist their participation. Such churches, whilst needing to agree the WCC basis, need not identify themselves with particular WCC policy decisions. Whilst this might aid some Orthodox churches it was not uniquely designed for them and could be of interest to some Evangelical and Pentecostal non-member churches.

At the same time the requirements of new member churches were made more explicit, though the matters here referred to are already present

in the rather attenuated basis of the WCC. Thus those charged with assessing an application to join would seek assurance of the applying church that:

- i. In its life and witness, the church professes faith in the triune God as expressed in the scriptures and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed;
- ii. The church maintains a ministry of proclaiming the Gospel and celebrating the sacraments;
- iii. The church baptizes in the name of the 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit';
- iv. The Church recognises the presence and activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit outside its own boundaries and prays for the wisdom of all in the awareness that other member churches also believe in the Holy Trinity and the saving grace of God;
- v. The Church recognises in the other member churches of the WCC elements of the true church, even if it does not regard them as true churches in the full sense of the word.

The report produced a little controversy. On the one hand, some Orthodox [e.g. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana] was worried lest the second category of membership would allow too many Orthodox churches to dilute their ecumenical commitment by opting for the associating category. This, in fact, has not happened. On the other, publicity was given to the resignation of the radical Bishop Margot Kasemman from the Central Committee because she thought the Orthodox had been allowed to become too influential, and objected to their challenging of her God-given episcopate. Others feared that consensus decision-making would neutralise the Council's ability to speak prophetically to many difficult moral and ethical issues.

In such circumstances, what is needed is more than words and constitutional strategies; rather, an essential understanding of the value of the other as precious in the sight of God and a valued partner in establishing his kingdom. If this mutual trust can be established, in which everyone is more anxious to speak for others than for themselves, then this can indeed spell out a new beginning.

Alongside these discussions the idea of a World Christian Forum was facilitated by the Council with support from the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity, the World Evangelical Fellowship and a number of Pentecostal and other church bodies.

## 2. Worship in an Ecumenical Context

In the period in which relations between orthodox and non-orthodox were deteriorating, common worship became a contentious issue, understandably from an orthodox point-of-view when attending morning prayers to be confronted with a female priest using inclusive language and seeking congregational responses.

To help meet such difficulties, including the possibility that common prayer could be taken to imply some kind of ecclesial character to the sponsoring body, it was proposed that the WCC operate with patterns of common prayer which would not surprise the Orthodox with processes which they might find either ambiguous or offensive. To this end the language of 'ecumenical worship' will not be used, thus avoiding the suggestion that the forms there used had universal ecclesial sanction, and thereby suggesting a greater church unity than actually exists. Instead, two categories are proposed: confessional, which should be announced as such, and inter-confessional.

Confessional prayer can reflect the recognition of all churches which are in mutual communion with the sponsoring church, so need not be mono-denominational. The criteria to be used here is faithfulness to and reflection of the usage of the sponsoring churches.

On the other hand, 'Interconfessional common prayer is usually prepared for specific ecumenical events. It does not emerge out of a single ecclesial tradition, or one church. It may represent patterns that churches have in common (service of the word, daily office), but it is not the established liturgy of one confession. It has no ecclesial standing.'<sup>24</sup>

The ideal is to build confidence and quietly to learn from one another.

## 3. Ecclesiology

In any conversation with Orthodox brothers and sisters, the issue of ecclesiology soon emerges. The subject is of the first importance, but the gulf to be overcome here is very considerable. It is not so much that there are two ecclesiologies operating here but two different kinds of ecclesiology. The Orthodox Church [as the Roman Catholic, and some extreme fundamentalists] operate with an exclusive ecclesiology which identifies Orthodoxy with the one holy apostolic and catholic church, whereas the churches of the reformation argue that their churches are part of the one holy apostolic and catholic church, which is multi-confessional,

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<sup>24</sup> The substance of this section and this quotation comes from Appendix A to *The Final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC*.



deploying many different styles of worship and ministry. To move forward two critical questions are: to the Orthodox – is there space for other churches in Orthodox ecclesiology?<sup>25</sup> To the churches of the reformation: how does your church maintain and express your belonging to the one holy catholic and apostolic church?

In this area there is need for much more thinking together, listening to one another, trying together to wrestle with very big issues. Thoughtful evangelicals are themselves dissatisfied with the individualism of a former age and are themselves seeking a deeper theology of the church in which help may well come from orthodox understandings.

When I retired, for the second time, I was honoured to receive a festschrift, the forward to which was written by a good Orthodox friend, but in that volume you will find an essay by Professor Paul Fiddes of the University of Oxford entitled ‘The Church and Salvation: a Comparison of Orthodox and Baptist Thinking’ which makes interesting suggestions as to how the two traditions might interact with one another.<sup>26</sup> Patient work on such themes can produce good results. By contrast not to respect the identity of other churches, as in the case of sectarian missionary endeavour which is careless of existing church ministries, reveals a distorted view of the church on the part of such agencies.

#### 4. Evangelism and Proselytism

Evangelism here represents the genuine article; proselytism its fraudulent, predatory, imitation, using illegitimate means such as the offering of secular inducements to secure religious change, the manipulation, or even the violation, of the would-be convert, use of any form of power in matters of conscience, what in old-fashioned language we used to call ‘sheep-stealing’, language which I remember appealed to Metropolitan Anthony of Transylvania, when introduced to a Central Committee debate in Buenos Aires by Dr David Russell of the British Baptist Union. Even in as important a matter as evangelism it is possible to act illegitimately and unethically.

Rather than explore the issue in depth, on which many papers exist, let me recall a conversation I had with Father Vitaly Borovoy in Moscow in the summer of 1989 when, as always, he offered sound advice and said of protestant missionary endeavour in Russia – ‘If you can persuade atheists

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<sup>25</sup> The issue is very helpfully presented by Metropolitan Kallistos [Timothy] Ware in *The Orthodox Church*, New Edition (Penguin, 1993), pp. 307-11.

<sup>26</sup> P.S. Fiddes, ‘The Church and Salvation: a Comparison of Orthodox and Baptist Thinking’ in Anthony R. Cross (ed.), *Ecumenism and History, Studies in Honour of John H Y Briggs* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2002), pp. 120-148.

and unbelievers to become Christians you will have our prayers, and if there are orthodox people who have forgotten their baptism and you can reawaken the life of the Spirit in them when we have failed, again God bless you, - but please, please do not disturb those who are faithful in their attendance at the Liturgy'. That certainly was a strategy that commended itself to me.

That some evangelicals working in Moslem countries, finding that task very unrewarding, have turned their energies towards members of the ancient churches of those countries is most regrettable, especially where those self-same churches have graciously offered opportunities for service in their own institutions.<sup>27</sup>

## 5. Scripture and Tradition

Traditionally, Protestants, in defining their position in contrast to that of the Catholic Church, have opposed scripture to tradition, though modern scholarship sees the two, in the apostolic period, as intimately associated the one with the other, for it was within the life of the church that the traditions of the apostles were collected and eventually written down to become the New Testament canon, which in its turn has become virtually the only source for our understanding of the emergent life of the apostolic church. So, for the early church the primary tradition is scripture, whilst the documents that make up scripture were nurtured and cared for within church tradition. When heresies arose the church fathers appealed to scripture as offering the appropriate standard by which to judge such novelties. Later, the patristic tradition, the teaching of the church fathers, secured honoured respect alongside the apostolic tradition contained in scripture, not as an addition to scripture, but as an aid in discerning scripture's true meaning. Later came such deductions of doctrine as found in scripture in the form of 'creeds' which secured authority in the whole church as being consonant with scripture by decision of the early church councils.

It is significant that in the life of English Dissent in the early eighteenth century there was a cleavage over the issue of whether or not to subscribe to specific trinitarian articles of faith, as over those who claimed that scripture was the only authority to be admitted in all matters of faith and conduct, not any man-made deduction therefrom. Significantly those who argued for 'scripture only' were, within a generation or so, to develop aberrant views on the Trinity. Sincere believers, reading scripture apart

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<sup>27</sup> For an example of a more constructive way of co-operation and a regional approach to Orthodox-Evangelical relations, see D.P Teague (ed.), *Turning Over a New Leaf: Protestant Missions and the Orthodox Churches of the Middle East*, Second Edition (Jointly published by: Interserve/MEM, 1992).

from the historic traditions of the church in which the form of the church's doctrine, as witnessed in the historic creeds, had been hammered out, could be a dangerous thing. All this is to say that evangelical dissenters have come to see the importance of tradition.

Certain Orthodox definitions of tradition help to bridge ancient divisions, as for example when Metropolitan Kallistos Ware writes,

Tradition is not so much a 'deposit of doctrine' as a shared style of living, not primarily an accumulation of documents and testimonies but the life of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the church..... In any discussion of the topic, what needs to be said first of all is that the only true tradition is living, critical and creative, formed by the union of human freedom with the grace of the Holy Spirit.... Tradition is not so much a long line stretched out in time as the gathering of time itself into God's eternity, the irruption into the present age of the eschaton, or age to come.<sup>28</sup>

Tradition as representing 'the dynamic movement of God in history' also becomes the Church's memory, a recalling to the mind of all the way that God has led his people, and all the guiding and empowering provided by the Spirit, not only in times of revival and expansion but in those days when the church's faith has been severely tested.

I hope I have done enough to show that a friendly exploration of common concerns between Evangelicals and Orthodox can act creatively in the witness of the whole church. More could be said about the historical process in which the following events/publications have played their part: the Evangelical Alliance's report 'Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church', published in 2001, the series of seminars organised by Professor Ioan Sauca, Director of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, and Dr Grass of Spurgeon's College at Bossey, a seminar organised at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague in 2003,<sup>29</sup> not to mention the helpful meetings that Father Platt of the Oxford Orthodox parish and Dr Grass have organised in Oxford, all of which I applaud, praying that the process may continue to develop confidence between the two traditions to the mutual benefit of both.

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<sup>28</sup> Kallistos Ware, 'Tradition and Traditions' in Lossky et al (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, pp. 1147-8.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Randall (ed.), *Baptists and the Orthodox Church: On the way to understanding* (Prague: IBTS, 2003).

## A Writ Good Guide

### The Bible in *The Way of the Pilgrim* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*<sup>1</sup>

Tim Noble

*The Way of a Pilgrim*<sup>2</sup> was first published in its present form in Kazan in 1884.<sup>3</sup> Coincidentally that year saw the two-hundredth anniversary of the publication of the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>4</sup> The works are thus divided by several centuries and many thousands of kilometres, and their authors belong to very different Christian traditions.<sup>5</sup> In what follows I want to look at the ways in which each author appeals to the Bible as authority, whilst at the same time allowing space for other interpretive authorities, thus enabling the Bible to be internalised as the Word of God in particular lives.

I begin with *The Way of a Pilgrim*, and the role played in it by the Bible, the *Philokalia* and the *starets*.<sup>6</sup> I will then turn to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, looking not only at its appeal to biblical authority, but also at some of the other figures who appear to help Christian on his journey. In doing this, I examine the different forms of interpretation used in each work, and the similarities and differences between them.

### *The Way of a Pilgrim*

#### The Text

The precise origin of *The Way of a Pilgrim* remains unclear. The author is not named. Purportedly he is a *strannik*, someone who wanders from place to place, in search of spiritual enlightenment.<sup>7</sup> We know from fairly early

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<sup>1</sup> This study is a part of the research project 'Symbolic Mediation of Wholeness in Western Orthodoxy', GAČR P401/11/1688.

<sup>2</sup> The original Russian title, *Otkrovennye rasskazy strannika dukhovnomu ottsu svoemu* means 'The Sincere Tales of a Wanderer to his Spiritual Father'.

<sup>3</sup> This year, 2011, marks the centenary of the publication of the revised edition which contains the continuation of the pilgrim's story. Although of interest, it is generally regarded as a later addition, written in a somewhat different style, and I will not focus on it in what follows.

<sup>4</sup> Part I, on which I shall concentrate in this paper, was first published in 1678.

<sup>5</sup> However, Jaroslav Pelikan has also seen connections in spirit between the two. See Jaroslav Pelikan, 'Preface', in A. Pentkovsky (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Tale* (trans. T.A. Smith) (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), pp. ix-xii, here p. xi: 'in its use of pilgrimage as a root metaphor, Kozlov's *The Pilgrim's Tale* is far closer to Bunyan or Comenius than to Chaucer'.

<sup>6</sup> I will explain both these terms in due course.

<sup>7</sup> Anat Vernitski, 'The Way of the Pilgrim: Literary Reading of a Religious Text', *Slavonica* 9/2 (2003), pp. 113-122, explains thus: 'The term in Russian denotes a religious wanderer who wanders from

on that he has some physical disability, which we later learn is a withered left arm, caused by an injury inflicted on him by his brother.<sup>8</sup> A reference to the Crimean War<sup>9</sup> would seem to date the events of the book in the mid-nineteenth century. However, the fact that he can obviously read Church Slavonic fluently and easily, the highly stylised artlessness of the writing, and textual analysis, have all led commentators to assume that the text is the product of one or more educated monks or clergy.<sup>10</sup>

The exact authorship is not particularly relevant to my argument, but among those suggested as authors is Archimandrite Mikhail Kozlov (1826-84),<sup>11</sup> a former Old Believer.<sup>12</sup> The presence of so many scriptural references in the work is attributed by some<sup>13</sup> to Archimandrite Mikhail's roots. Moreover, both he and another putative author, Arsenii Troepolskii (1804-70),<sup>14</sup> spent time as wanderers, which indicates that there may be a historical foundation to some of the tales in the book.<sup>15</sup>

Whoever wrote it, the basic outline of the work can be expressed briefly. It begins with the wanderer hearing the text of 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 'Pray continuously'. He then sets out to discover what this means. After a series of false starts, he encounters a *starets* (an elder or spiritual director), who introduces him to the Jesus Prayer, and to the insights of the *Philokalia*, a compendium of hesychast writings, compiled on Mount Athos in the eighteenth-century by St Macarios Notaras (1731-1805) and St

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monastery to monastery in search of spiritual enlightenment rather than a pilgrim who travels to a specific holy location' (see endnote 2, p. 121).

<sup>8</sup> I use the following translation in this paper: *The Way of a Pilgrim* and *The Pilgrim Continues His Way*, trans. Helen Bacovcin (New York: Image, 1992). See on this pp. 59-60. We are first informed about the injury at the beginning of the second chapter of the book, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 92.

<sup>10</sup> On the textual history, see Suzette Phillips, 'Anonymous (Mid-Nineteenth Century): *The Way of a Pilgrim*' in Arthur Holder (ed.), *Christian Spirituality: The Classics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 293-304, here pp. 294-295, and Vernitski, 'The Way of the Pilgrim: Literary Reading of a Religious Text', pp. 114-115. See also the introduction by Alexei Pentkovsky in Pentkovsky (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Tale*, pp. 1-36.

<sup>11</sup> On Archimandrite Mikhail, see Pentkovsky (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Tale*, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> The Old Believers (also known as Old Ritualists) broke away from the main body of the church in the seventeenth century as part of the Great Schism, caused by reforms introduced by the Patriarch Nikon. Although apparently very conservative, in fact they turned often to the Scriptures for their authority. See Lyudmila Vorontsova and Sergei Filatov, 'Paradoxes of the Old Believer Movement', *Religion, State & Society*, 28/1 (2000), pp. 53-67, especially pp. 56-57. For a brief introduction to Old Believers and other religious groupings in Russia, see also Susan Wiley Hardwick, *Russian Refuge: Religion, Migration, and Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 21-32. See also Roy Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995), pp. 71-72, on the place of the Bible in Old Believer life.

<sup>13</sup> See Vernitski, 'The Way of the Pilgrim: Literary Reading of a Religious Text', p. 115, and references there.

<sup>14</sup> On Troepolskii, see Pentkovsky (ed.), *The Pilgrim's Tale*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>15</sup> Phillips, 'Anonymous', pp. 294-295.

Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain<sup>16</sup> (1749-1809), and first published in Venice in 1782. At around the same time, St Paisius Velichovsky (1722-1794) had begun translating works into Church Slavonic. When he was made aware of the Greek version, he chose twenty-four of the thirty-six texts, which were published in 1793, under the title *Dobrotolyubije*.<sup>17</sup> It was presumably this edition to which the wanderer had access.

The *starets* enables him to learn and practice the Jesus Prayer and tells him of the *Philokalia*. The Jesus Prayer consists of constant repetition of the phrase ‘Lord Jesus, have mercy on me’.<sup>18</sup> The idea is that after a while the phrase becomes, as it were, embedded so that it prays itself, leading the person praying to constant contact with God. After the death of his elder, the wanderer continues his journey, acquires a copy of the *Philokalia*, and heads for Irkutsk, to visit the tomb of St Innocent.<sup>19</sup> En route, he has various adventures and encounters. The final two chapters of the book consist of his conversations with his spiritual father, in which he gives a brief account of his life and his future plans.

## The Bible in *The Way of a Pilgrim*

*The Way of a Pilgrim* begins thus:

By the grace of God I am a Christian, by my deeds a great sinner, and by my calling a homeless wanderer of humblest origin, roaming from place to place. My possessions consist of a knapsack with dry crusts of bread on my back and in my bosom the Holy Bible. That is all!<sup>20</sup>

Anat Vernitski suggests that this passage is meant in part to be read symbolically, for ‘the physical body is content with the minimum (dry biscuits) when the soul is filled with the Word of God (the Bible)’.<sup>21</sup> Whether or not we accept such an explanation, there is no doubt that the possession of the Bible is highly significant for the wanderer. Moreover, not only does he own it, but he clearly reads it. In fact, the story continues immediately with his account of how he went to church on the twenty-

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<sup>16</sup> Thus he is also known as the Hagiorite.

<sup>17</sup> See John McGuckin, ‘The Life and Mission of St Paisius Velichkovsky (1722-1794). An Early Modern Master of The Orthodox Spiritual Life’, *Spiritus* 9 (2009), pp. 157-173.

<sup>18</sup> Some versions are slightly longer – Lord Jesus have mercy on me, a sinner – or shorter: Lord Jesus have mercy.

<sup>19</sup> St Innocent (c.1680 – 1731) was born Ivan Kulchitsky, and was initially active as a priest in various government posts. He was meant to be the Russian representative and a leader of the Russian mission in China, but was refused entry. So, in 1727, he was sent to be the first bishop of Siberia, where he died four years later. After the discovery of his remains when the Ascension Monastery in Irkutsk was being restored, there was a growing flow of pilgrims to his tomb. He was recognised as a saint in 1804.

<sup>20</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Vernitski, ‘The Way of the Pilgrim: Literary Reading of a Religious Text’, p. 116.

fourth Sunday after Pentecost, where he heard the reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians, urging him to pray constantly. He goes on 'I checked my Bible and saw with my own eyes exactly what I had heard...'<sup>22</sup>

The wanderer's self-description of being of the humblest origin is clearly belied by his ability to read the Bible in Church Slavonic, not to mention by his subsequent story, which reveals that he came from a relatively secure background.<sup>23</sup> But this opening does serve to place the relationship of the wanderer to the Bible at the centre of the story. It is only when he has confirmed with his own eyes what he has heard that he is entirely convinced of the need to seek for a way to pray continuously. As Vernitski notes, it is significant that the wanderer does not appear to possess any icons,<sup>24</sup> and sight is almost entirely restricted to its use for appropriating the written word. The Bible is his icon, at least at the beginning of the book, and it is through his visual interaction with the Bible that what he hears is confirmed and given true authority.

Icons, however, if they are to remain icons, must always contain an element of transcendence, where the gaze of God encounters us and we are confronted by the mystery of God.<sup>25</sup> In other words, for the wanderer the Bible is both a source of revelation and encounter with God, but also necessarily an encounter with a God who is ultimately mysterious. Thus, he takes the command to 'Pray continuously' seriously, because it is God who commands it, but he does not understand what it means. He is, for that reason, forced to seek help in interpreting what he hears.

This point is reinforced following his meeting with the *starets* who initiates him on the path towards continuous prayer. The wanderer asks the *starets* where he can learn more. The *starets* points him to the *Philokalia*. At this point, the wanderer asks 'Is it more important than the Holy Bible?'<sup>26</sup> The elder replies 'No, it is neither more important nor holier than

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<sup>22</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 59. He explains that, having been left as orphans, he and his brother were raised by their grandparents. His grandfather was an innkeeper in a good spot and was prosperous. In his autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, John Bunyan is eager to make the same claim about his own humble origins – see John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, p. 7, in John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding and The Life and Death of Mr Badman* (Everyman's Library Series) (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1953). Again, Bunyan's claim to be 'of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land' needs to be taken with a certain degree of scepticism, though it is true that his father had had to sell part of his inheritance in the economic problems in early seventeenth-century England. On this, see Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People: John Bunyan and His Church* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), pp. 40-44.

<sup>24</sup> Vernitski, 'The Way of the Pilgrim: Literary Reading of a Religious Text', p. 120.

<sup>25</sup> See Tim Noble, *Liberation Theology and the Poor: Icons or Idols?* (London: Equinox, forthcoming), for more on this.

<sup>26</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 19.

the Bible, but it contains clear exposition of the ideas that are mysteriously presented in the Bible and are not easy for our finite mind to understand'.<sup>27</sup> The image the elder uses is that of the sun and a reflecting glass which enables us to look at its rays without damaging our sight. The Bible is the sun and the *Philokalia* is what reflects its glorious mysteries to us. The ultimate point, perhaps, of the Jesus Prayer is to allow the person praying to enter more deeply into these mysteries,<sup>28</sup> not so that we know everything, at some superficial level, but so that we become more aware of the height and depth and breadth and length of the mystery in which we are subsumed. The prayer is our companion on our journey towards God, a journey which is also always already a journey in the Spirit.

In his essay on *The Way of a Pilgrim*, Leonard Stanton sees this passage as emphasising the essential equality between the Scriptures and Tradition as found in the works of the Fathers.<sup>29</sup> Stanton's point is that, as he puts it, '[t]he pilgrim, by his personal, practical communion with the realized eschatology of the Incarnate Word, enjoys proximity to Jesus comparable to that of the evangelists or the Fathers'.<sup>30</sup> Although this is not how he puts it, one could perhaps see here a sort of reader response approach – what is evoked in the reader is the same now as it was for the contemporary reader or for the Fathers. There is of course much to recommend this reading of the relationship to the Bible, since it bypasses any need for an over-strong dependence on historicity, which, in any case, is not in general in question in the Orthodox tradition. The historicity of the Bible, though, is the most superficial level at which it is encountered, and the most important readings happen at other deeper levels.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this, however, it seems to me that Stanton rather underestimates the centrality of the Scriptures in *The Way of a Pilgrim*. The Bible is not on a par with the Fathers, or with the *Philokalia*. In his introduction to the *Philokalia* (subtitled 'The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality'), Anthony Coniaris devotes a chapter to the use of the Bible in

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> St Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain also translated and adapted the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola for a Greek Orthodox setting. One can at least see points of intersection between the method of prayer in the *Philokalia* and Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. See on the differences and similarities between hesychasm and Ignatius, Ivana Noble, 'Religious Experience - Reality or Illusion: Insights from Symeon the New Theologian and Ignatius of Loyola', in L. Boeve et al., (eds.), *Encountering Transcendence: Contributions to a Theology of Christian Religious Experience* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), pp. 375-93.

<sup>29</sup> Leonard Stanton, 'Three Levels of Authorship in The Way of a Pilgrim', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 33/3 (1989), pp. 221-234, here pp. 223-225.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, John Breck, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood: SVS, 2001).



the work.<sup>32</sup> He suggests that one way of seeing the *Philokalia* is as a commentary on the Scriptures, a point found also in slightly different words in *The Way of a Pilgrim*.<sup>33</sup> In this sense, it is right that the wanderer begins his journey with the dry bread and the Bible, but without mentioning the *Philokalia*, since it is the Bible which has priority. It is precisely because the Bible is, as Coniaris puts it, 'indispensable',<sup>34</sup> that the *Philokalia* is so important as a guide to understanding the Scriptures.

Coniaris gives a long list of quotations, from the Fathers and some more contemporary theologians, which urge constant turning to the Scriptures as the source and summit of the Christian life.<sup>35</sup> For the Fathers, the Bible is not to be read to discover an ethical code for living, or even the history of salvation, but to encounter or to be encountered by God. As we have seen for the wanderer, in this sense the Bible is the first icon, a place of refuge, of counsel, of wisdom, of refreshment. The writers do not concentrate so much on the specific content of Scripture, though they know it intimately and quote it often, but rather on the reality of the Bible, the Spirit-filled presence of the voice of God among and to us.

This point is emphasised by the way in which the Fathers also saw the Scriptures as food, another form, alongside the Eucharist, of *viaticum*. For the wanderer in *The Way of a Pilgrim*, the Bible is indeed his guide for the journey to which he turns in moments of need, and from which he draws strength. Paul Evdokimov, a major Orthodox theologian of the mid-twentieth century, once said that '[w]hile reading Scripture, the Fathers read not words, but the living Christ and Christ spoke to them. They consumed words in the manner of the Eucharistic bread and wine and the word appeared to them in its Christ dimension.'<sup>36</sup> The Bible is here sustenance and memory, a guide on a journey which the wanderer undertakes, but never alone, since others have gone before. For this reason, the Bible is to be pondered on, savoured and enjoyed.<sup>37</sup>

These elements from the *Philokalia* are implicitly illustrated in one of the stories involving the Bible in *The Way of a Pilgrim*. After the death

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<sup>32</sup> Anthony M. Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing, 1998). The chapter in question is Chapter 21, entitled 'The Fathers of the Philokalia and the Bible', pp. 269-281. Coniaris' work is more of a loosely linked selection of quotations from sources ancient and modern, than a sustained argument, but it is of some value as a summary of the themes of the *Philokalia*.

<sup>33</sup> Coniaris, *Philokalia*, p. 269, *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Coniaris, *Philokalia*, p. 279.

<sup>35</sup> To adapt the description of the place of the liturgy found in Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10. See Coniaris, *Philokalia*, pp. 269-273.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted, without reference, in Coniaris, *Philokalia*, pp. 273-4.

<sup>37</sup> See the quotations in Coniaris, *Philokalia*, pp. 274-5.

of his elder, as noted above, the wanderer sets off to visit the tomb of St Innocent in Irkutsk. Not long after, he is mugged by two runaway soldiers on the road, who steal his two most prized possessions, the Bible and the copy of the *Philokalia*. He says of the books:

Day and night I could not stop my tears and sorrow as I thought, Where is the Bible which I read since I was a little boy and which I always kept close to my heart? Where is my *Philokalia*, from which I gained so much guidance and comfort? I was most unhappy without my two treasures, for I had not been sufficiently fed on them.<sup>38</sup>

The Bible and the *Philokalia*, as the work which reveals to the wanderer some of the mystery of God that encounters him in the Bible, are seen as nourishment, a source of food that is still plentiful. It is interesting that what gets him moving and out of his initial depression is a vision of his departed *starets*, who tells him not to be so dependent on material possessions, and does so with the help of verses from the Bible (1 Tim 2:4 and 1 Cor 10:13). He is soon reunited with his books, when he comes across a military escort with the two men who had robbed him under guard. The wanderer gets into conversation with the officer leading the escort, who invites him to spend the night with them. Over supper the officer recounts his story.

As a young officer, he had become an alcoholic, and eventually been reduced to the ranks. A monk who had come to beg asked him what his problem was, so he explained. The monk gave him a copy of the gospels, and instructed him to read it every time he felt like having a drink. Although he had no interest in or intention of doing so, the next time he went to his trunk to get some money to go to the nearest pub, he saw the book and remembered what the monk had told him. So, he began reading Matthew's gospel, first not understanding anything, but by the third chapter finding it a bit easier. By this stage the curfew had been sounded and he could not go out. In the morning, he says, 'my first thought was to get a drink, but then I decided to read another chapter to see what would happen'.<sup>39</sup> And so it continued, with comprehension growing and the desire for drink receding, so that 'when I had finally finished reading all four Gospels the compulsion for drink had disappeared completely'.<sup>40</sup>

Again, one notes that it is not so much the content of the gospels or the Bible which are seen as of primary importance, but their iconic

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<sup>38</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31. Vernitski, 'The Way of the Pilgrim: Literary Reading of a Religious Text', p. 118, notes that this very humorous telling of the story is part of the *skaz* genre, of which, he argues, *The Way of a Pilgrim* is an excellent example.

<sup>40</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 32.

presence, the way in which they are a medium through which God reveals and works his saving will. Even here, despite the honour paid to the Scriptures *qua* object, what matters is the constancy of attention to the word, the savouring it, the letting it enter into the heart and mind of the reader. This is emphasised by the continuation of the conversation, when the captain asks the wanderer ‘And what is more valuable, the Jesus Prayer or the Gospel?’ The wanderer replies: ‘They are equal in importance... because the holy name of Jesus Christ contains within itself all the truths of the Gospel. The holy Fathers say that the Jesus Prayer is the abbreviated form of the Gospel’.<sup>41</sup>

The role of the Bible, then, is to accompany, instruct and guide. But, although there are references to the Bible throughout the work, either to specific verses, or to the Bible as a whole, it is not the content which is primarily stressed. To put it another way, the Bible is a companion but not an instruction manual. It is not somewhere to find answers to questions, but in the Bible we encounter and are encountered by the power of God, the Spirit who moves us to prayer, who prays within us. The *Philokalia* and the wise *starets* are the ones who enable us not so much to understand the Bible as to enter more deeply into its mystery, so that the mystery of God is not outside but at work within us.

## John Bunyan and *The Pilgrim's Progress*

The mid-seventeenth century dissenter John Bunyan<sup>42</sup> wrote the First Part of his allegorical work *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the late 1660s or early 1670s, whilst imprisoned in the county jail in Bedford.<sup>43</sup> It has become one of the most translated works of English literature, contributing a number of images and phrases to the English language. As with *The Way of a Pilgrim* I want to look at *The Pilgrim's Progress* to see what role the Bible plays in it, and what helps Christian to interpret and understand the Bible. On occasions, I also turn to Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding*, written just before *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* begins as follows:

As I walked through the wilderness of the world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep, and as I slept I dreamed a dream. I dreamed and behold I saw a man clothed

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<sup>41</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 33-4.

<sup>42</sup> Precise arguments over Bunyan's churchmanship are not germane to my argument here. Bunyan is certainly in most matters closely aligned with the early Baptist communities.

<sup>43</sup> See Roger Sharrock, 'Introduction', in John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (edited with notes by Roger Sharrock) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), ix-x.

with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, ‘What shall I do?’<sup>44</sup>

We start, then, with a dream of a man reading the Bible, though we are not told precisely what passage he is reading. In the first part of his journey, as he heads through the Slough of Despond towards the Wicket Gate, the book is his reference point in his conversations with others. Twice he urges Obstinate to read what is written in it.<sup>45</sup> Pliable, his first, though as the name suggests ultimately impermanent companion, asks him ‘And do you think that the words of your book are certainly true?’, to which Christian replies ‘Yes verily, for it was made by him that cannot lie’.<sup>46</sup> But it is also the reading of the book, he tells Mr Worldy Wiseman, that has caused him to acquire the burden he carries on his back.<sup>47</sup> Thus the Bible serves both as that which convicts us of sin, but also as the guide to the right path and to salvation.<sup>48</sup>

The book itself, however, becomes less and less visible and important as the story goes on, being replaced by the scroll which Bunyan is given when his burden is removed at the cross.<sup>49</sup> This is not, of course, to say that the Bible is abandoned, since references to it continue throughout the course of the work. Whether or not the scroll is a sign of election,<sup>50</sup> its possession is seen as central, in a way that the possession of the Bible as a book is not. In part this may be because the Bible is, as it were, the starting point, the base on which and out of which all else springs. Thus, to refer to

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<sup>44</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 13 ‘Read it so, if you will, in my book’, and p. 14 ‘If you believe not me, read here in this book’.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 15. The reference is to Titus 1:2 (‘in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began’, AV).

<sup>47</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, p. 19.

<sup>48</sup> This may also indicate why there has been work recently on the ‘post-modern’ Bunyan, with the deeply ambiguous relationship to the written word. See, for example, Stuart Sim and David Walker, *Bunyan and Authority: The Rhetoric of Dissent and the Legitimation Crisis in Seventeenth-Century England* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000); Michael Davies, *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, p. 36. On the importance of this document, see the fascinating article by Isabel Hofmeyr, ‘Dreams, Documents and “Fetishes”’: African Christian Interpretation of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 12/1 (2002), pp. 440-456.

<sup>50</sup> When Christian and Hopeful arrive at the Celestial City, they are admitted on presenting their scrolls, whilst Ignorance, who does not have one, is turned away – see Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, pp. 140-141. Davies, *Graceful Reading*, argues that we should not read Bunyan, and especially not *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, as being so straightforwardly Calvinist as is generally presumed – see for example, pp. 232-250.

it would be to some extent meaningless, since it is the Bible itself which in a certain sense narrates the story of the path of Christian's salvation.<sup>51</sup>

To go back to the opening quotation from Bunyan's work, it also serves to say something about the practice of interpretation. Throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress* there are a number of tensions, one of which is between the individual's right to act as interpreter of the Scripture for her- or himself, and the other, the need for a teacher to explain and help understand what is written.

Thus we begin with Christian reading his book, and finding in it the threat of eternal damnation for all around him. Even the briefest glance at Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* is enough to make clear that Bunyan himself struggled for a long time to come to terms with the threats which he perceived in his reading of the Bible. The very first stirrings of conversion came to Bunyan as he was playing a game one Sunday, his conscience having been pricked by a sermon denouncing such activity that same morning. As he was playing, he says, 'a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?'<sup>52</sup> It was this question, in one form or another, that was to inform the very long drawn-out story of Bunyan's own pilgrimage. He wrestles with the question of salvation, of what is necessary in order that he may leave his sins and go to heaven, rather than stay with them and go to hell. It is thus perhaps not altogether surprising that the reading of Luther's Commentary on the Galatians had such an impact on him.<sup>53</sup> In terms remarkably similar to the wanderer's description of his acquisition of his copy of the *Philokalia*,<sup>54</sup> Bunyan writes:

...God... did cast into my hand, one day, a book of Martin Luther; it was his comment on the Galatians – it also was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much that such an old book had fallen into my hands; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition, in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People*, p. 207, drawing on Olivier Lutaud, notes indeed that 'we might find the main source for *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the Bible – a Bible read through romantic spectacles, Exodus and the return from the Babylonian Exile, pilgrimage to the Promised Land or to Zion...'

<sup>52</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, p. 12.

<sup>53</sup> See on this Galen Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience: John Bunyan on Self, Community and Christian Faith* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), especially pp. 47-87.

<sup>54</sup> See *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 24 and p. 26.

<sup>55</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, p. 41.

But, with the introduction of this other, we see also that Bunyan never entirely read the Bible alone.<sup>56</sup> Throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress*, there are others who come to join Christian on his journey, or give him rest and succour. Perhaps the key figure here is Evangelist, often taken to be a portrait of John Gifford, the Bedford pastor who had helped Bunyan in his own hour of need.<sup>57</sup> Christian first meets Evangelist at the beginning of the story, when he is at a loss over what to do.<sup>58</sup> Christian is still seeking to discover what he needs to do to be saved. Thus, at the start, at least, for Christian, the Bible is sufficient to convict him of his need for salvation, but he does not yet know what way to follow, and has to turn to Evangelist for help.

Rather paradoxically, perhaps, John Gifford, Bunyan reports, used to encourage his listeners in order to avoid falling into the temptations to which they were prone, 'to take special heed that we took not up any truth upon trust – as from this, or that, or any other man or men – but to cry mightily to God that he would convince us of the reality thereof, and set us down therein, by his own Spirit, in the Holy Word'.<sup>59</sup> Evangelist's task is to point Christian in the right direction, and especially to help him on his way through the Wicket Gate to the cross where he can be relieved of his burden. He also reappears just before the trial at Vanity Fair, in which Faithful will be martyred. Thus, Evangelist is the one who both points Christian on the way, and also comforts him in his time of need.

The fact that his appearances, as Sim and Walker note, are only 'fleeting',<sup>60</sup> should not, however, be taken to mean (as Sim and Walker do) that Christian is flung back on his own resources. Rather, we can perhaps take it, as we frequently find in *Grace Abounding*, that this is a sign of God's providence, allowing the pilgrim to come across those he or she needs on the journey. Infrequency should not be automatically equated with unimportance. Thus, Evangelist and other figures, such as the Interpreter, serve to explain, to enlighten, to direct.

Related to this is the presence of the Church in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It has often been assumed that this presence is minimal, but this is because of a misreading of the nature of Church in the work. Galen Johnson cites Gordon Wakefield to the effect that 'there is a very clear presence of the Church in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but readers miss it if

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<sup>56</sup> This is the gist of Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience*, who wants to rescue Bunyan from overly subjectivist interpretations. Although stronger on assertion than argument, his point is a useful corrective.

<sup>57</sup> See Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>58</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>59</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, p. 38.

<sup>60</sup> Sim and Walker, *Bunyan and Authority*, p. 135.

they think of the church in Episcopal or Presbyterian, not non-conformist, congregational, Baptist terms'.<sup>61</sup> The presence of the church is partly evidenced in Christian's constant desire for companionship<sup>62</sup> which needs to be read as the gathering of believers to journey together towards what Bunyan calls the Celestial City. This is another way in which the interpretation of the Scripture is shared. It is through conversation, questioning, listening and responding, that the meaning of what is written in Christian's book becomes clear.

Galen Johnson argues that in the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 'the Bible is the visitor's guide of Heaven but not its map. It beckons Christian to leave the City of Destruction for the Celestial City and tells him what he will find once he arrives there... but it does not tell him *how* to get there.'<sup>63</sup> This explains why there is no reference to the Bible as such (or 'the book', as it is normally called) in the journey from the cross to the Celestial City. That is not to say that there are no Scriptural allusions, since the text is full of them, but the Bible itself, the book Christian had held in his hand at the beginning, is not present. Michael Davies, in examining Bunyan's biblical hermeneutics, suggests that 'Bunyan's spiritual reading of Scripture sometimes goes beyond any conventional or rudimentary typologizing, and with important implications for the reader of his allegories and narrative works too'.<sup>64</sup> Bunyan's reading, he says, is "spiritual" as opposed to [...] literal or historical'.<sup>65</sup>

This underpins the point I have made on several occasions already, that, though the references to the Bible as such in the work may be relatively few and non-existent in the latter stages of the journey, the whole of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is radically infused with Bunyan's biblical vision, a vision which moves between typology and allegory, rather than a concentration on historical or literal senses of the text. For Bunyan, the interaction with any text, and thus *a fortiori* with the Bible, is to involve the reader in 'a kind of reading that should move the reader towards nothing less than the kind of saving spiritual experience that begins with conversion'.<sup>66</sup> Thus, rather than write about the Bible, Bunyan writes from within a world which is defined (explained and framed) by the Scripture.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience*, p. 147, referring to Gordon Wakefield, *Bunyan the Christian* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 67.

<sup>62</sup> See Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience*, pp. 143-145.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145. Italics in original.

<sup>64</sup> Davies, *Graceful Reading*, p. 72.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>67</sup> In the index of Scriptural references to *The Pilgrim's Progress Part I* available at [www.ccel.org/ccel/bunyan/pilgrim.vi.i.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bunyan/pilgrim.vi.i.html) (accessed 9th March 2011), there are approximately 530 different references

It is the context within which he sees the world, the tools he has for understanding it, whilst at the same time that which needs to be understood and interpreted. This view of the Bible as *interpretans simul interpretandum* is one of the reasons why Christian is depicted as a pilgrim. The journey towards the plenitude that is promised in Christ<sup>68</sup> starts with an encounter with the Word of God, but it is only in that fullness that this Word can be understood, and that the Word, Jesus Christ, will be fully encountered without the temptations and trials that beset Christian's way.

## Conclusion: Two Pilgrims Side by Side

After examining each of the journeys separately, it is time in conclusion to point to some parallels and differences. We can start this, perhaps, by looking at the one biblical verse which is referred to in both texts, Ephesians 6:18. The verse and two passages are as follows:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Eph 6:18, AV)

About the midst of this valley I perceived the mouth of hell to be, and it stood also hard by the wayside. Now, thought Christian, what shall I do? And ever and anon the flame and smoke would come out in such abundance, with sparks and hideous noises, (things that cared not for Christian's sword, as did Apollyon before) that he was forced to put up his sword, and betake himself to another weapon, called All-prayer, (Eph 6:18); so he cried, in my hearing, '*O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*' (Ps 116:4)<sup>69</sup>

I checked my Bible and saw with my own eyes exactly what I had heard, that it is necessary to pray continuously (1 Thess 5:17); to pray in the Spirit on every possible occasion (Eph 6:18); in every place to lift your hands reverently in prayer (1 Tim 2:8).<sup>70</sup>

Two points come immediately to mind on comparing these passages. Although the verse is the same, each author draws on a particular part of it. For the Russian wanderer, this is further confirmation that prayer is to be continuous, whilst for Bunyan, it is read as the concluding verse of the description of the armour of faith, so that 'All-Prayer' is the most powerful of the weapons left to the pilgrim to avoid being dragged into the mouth of

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given. This online version is based on an edition published in 1853: John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress From This World to That Which Is to Come, delivered in the similitude of a dream* (Auburn: Derby and Miller; Buffalo: Geo. H. Derby and Co., 1853).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Col 1:19.

<sup>69</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 57.

<sup>70</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 13.



hell. The second point is that Bunyan reads or uses the passage allegorically, whilst the wanderer reads it much more literally.

On the first point, we could draw opposing conclusions, emphasising differences or similarities. For each of them, there is a clear biblical injunction which impinges radically on the life of the follower of Christ. For the wanderer, what matters most is prayer, to pray continuously. At this point of the book, he has no idea what it means, but precisely because he finds this verse to be confirmed in the Bible, he determines to find out. So, for him, it is prayer that is to be the constant companion on his journey towards God. Bunyan, perhaps surprisingly, makes little use of the armour of faith imagery in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but here he does draw on it. For him, then, prayer is not so much a constant companion, as the most powerful weapon against the dangers and temptations which the pilgrim is likely to meet. Thus, whilst valuing prayer, they each have a different idea of what it is, and what the Bible has to say about it. The wanderer prays, as it were, so that already he may be in the presence of God, so that the journey which he is undertaking may also at the same time know its end. This is what he finds in the Bible. Bunyan, for his part, sees prayer as one of the ways God has provided us for accompanying the journey, a help against trial and temptation, but not so much a foretaste of the fullness to come.

The second point is, at first sight, perhaps surprising. We might have expected an Orthodox reader of the Bible to be more accustomed to an allegorical or typological reading than a Non-Conformist. This would be, though, to confuse seventeenth century Non-Conformist Bible readers with some of their present-day descendants, and to over-simplify Orthodox interpretation. The Puritans of the seventeenth-century, as is partly evidenced by some of the names they gave their children, were perhaps the high point of the allegorical interpretations of Scripture, especially the Old Testament. Like many of the Church Fathers, they very rarely read the Bible only literally, at least if that is meant to imply a flat surface reading. Rather, they prized (and feared) the written word so highly<sup>71</sup> that everything in it had to have a deeper meaning. At the same time, at least for the writer(s) of *The Way of a Pilgrim*, the Bible, as with the medieval theologians, was so much part of his life that such verses as Ephesians 6:18 would immediately spring to mind when he thought about prayer. It is not that he would be incapable of allegorical readings, since, as we saw, there is a clear recognition of the depth and riches of the Bible, the book of mystery. In this sense, any understanding is always to some extent partial.

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<sup>71</sup> See Hofmeyr, 'Dreams, Documents and "Fetishes"'.

The two writers also have some similarities in their approach to the authority of the Bible. For both the Bible is the foundational text, the Word of God, on which they can rely. And yet, at the same time, this text is complex. It is a mystery, and it is something which we have to strive hard to understand. Thus it is that they both need to turn to outside help to grasp what is contained within it, even though both start with reading the book on their own.<sup>72</sup> For the wanderer, the chief help is another text, the *Philokalia*, whilst for Christian, it is found in various figures, such as Evangelist, or Interpreter, who guide him on his journey. These aids do not supplant the authority of the Scripture, but in order for the Scriptures to be read precisely as authoritative, help is required, since what they say is not taken to be self-evident, unless to the person of prayer and faith. Again, in this sense, the Bible is both starting point and destination. In reading the Bible we are sent out on the journey, but an integral part of the journey is to know the starting point.<sup>73</sup>

For all the many similarities,<sup>74</sup> there are differences. The wanderer is on what seems at times to be a vastly different journey to that of Christian. He meets, it is true, robbers and wild animals, and is threatened and beaten on several occasions. But his journey is much calmer, filled with the presence of the Jesus Prayer. The tribulations are both more real and less troubling. This is not a soul in anguish or fear, no Calvinist worried about salvation or perhaps more accurately damnation. This is an Orthodox Christian, who knows himself to be a great sinner, but is neither greatly surprised nor alarmed by that fact, since it is the reality of humankind. The task is not to wallow in this nor fear it, but to move forward on the journey towards God.

However much we may seek to mitigate Bunyan's Calvinism,<sup>75</sup> he is much more squarely a child of the Reformation. The journey is darker, more threatening, even after the burden is cast aside by the Cross. The threat of being lost remains, right up to the moment of admission to the Celestial City, as Ignorant discovers. Christian is in this sense soldier as well as pilgrim, a fighter for the Truth. At times, one might feel that God is

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<sup>72</sup> Recall Christian in rags with his burden and his book, and the quotation from *The Way of a Pilgrim* contained in this section, where he emphasises how he read in the Bible 'with my own eyes'.

<sup>73</sup> T.S. Eliot's famous lines from *Little Gidding*, 'We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time', come to mind here.

<sup>74</sup> Another is stylistic. As Vernitski, 'The Way of the Pilgrim: Literary Reading of a Religious Text', demonstrates, *The Way of a Pilgrim* is to be read within the nineteenth-century literary genre of *skaz*, a kind of picaresque rooted in the lives of ordinary people. Arguably, *The Pilgrim's Progress* could be read as belonging to this genre, too.

<sup>75</sup> The readings of Davies, *Graceful Reading*, and Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience*, are important in this respect, pointing to a greater complexity in Bunyan's theology.

chiefly present in *The Pilgrim's Progress* by his absence, that faith really is not only in that which is unseen, but in that which is supposed but ultimately unknown. It is very hard to imagine Christian praying the Jesus Prayer in order to prevent himself from stumbling from the path he is following.

Nevertheless, despite the different contexts,<sup>76</sup> what is perhaps most striking is how the two pilgrims' journeys can inform each other. In their adventures, their desire for companionship, their conversations, they share an experience with many underlying commonalities. The Bible is the guide book *par excellence* for both of them, though both need other figures and books to help them understand what it is that the Bible wants to tell them. It would be possible to dwell on the very different verses they choose from the Bible, and even the slightly different ways in which they read it. However, the other side of this coin is to see it as further testimony to the dangers of too restrictive an interpretation of the Bible, or more positively, to its riches, to the way in which it allows each Christian to find her or his way 'from this world to that which is to come'.

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<sup>76</sup> Though arguably Russia in the mid-to-late 1850s, just before the abolition of serfdom, and Civil War England are not so different. The soil out of which *The Way of a Pilgrim* grew is the soil out of which Russian Baptists would also grow.

## **Alexander Anderson: Baptist Pastor and Principal of the Chanonry School, Old Aberdeen, Scotland**

Derek Murray

I have been interested in this man since I first read the History of Crown Terrace Free Communion Baptist Church. Recently I found several of his publications in the Aberdeen Local History Library and I was lent a large book, by Donald Law, Honorary Deacon of Crown Terrace Church, whose great-grandfather and grandfather had been pupils at the Chanonry School from 1862-5, and 1882-3 respectively. *Spirat adhuc Amor* by Alexander Shewan,<sup>1</sup> of which only 250 copies were printed in 1923, contains extended memories of the school, written by old boys, and a list of former pupils, as well as quite a lot of information about Anderson.

Alexander Anderson was born in Peterhead, a fishing port on the North-East Coast of Scotland, in 1808, the son of a distinguished medical man, John Ford Anderson and Margaret Skelton, daughter of a Peterhead shipowner who, when left a widow with two sons and two daughters, moved to St Andrews in Fife to keep house for her uncle, the Revd Francis Nicoll, Principal of the University of St Andrews.<sup>2</sup> Anderson was first directed to law as a career and is said to have been influenced by a fellow apprentice, Robert Haldane of Cloan (described as an ex-naval officer and Baptist minister in Edinburgh – the first instance of the confused reporting which has beset me in this story!<sup>3</sup> The others are confusion about the school and Free Church in Alexander Gammie's otherwise admirable *The Churches of Aberdeen* (1908) and some confusion of generations of descendants in the *Fasti of the Church of Scotland*.<sup>4</sup> This Robert Haldane must have been a son of James Haldane and nephew of the evangelist Robert).

Anderson then went to study at St Andrews University where he met the young Thomas Chalmers, later leader of the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843, and became a lifelong friend. He graduated Master of Arts in 1826 (aged 18), continued in St Andrews to study Divinity, was licensed by the Presbytery of Deer in Aberdeenshire in April 1830 and was

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Shewan, *Spirat Adhuc Amor*, The Record of the Gym (Chanonry House School), Old Aberdeen (Aberdeen, 1923).

<sup>2</sup> The University of St Andrews, founded in 1413, is the oldest in Scotland and one of the oldest in Europe.

<sup>3</sup> Robert (1764-1842) and James (1768-1851) Haldane, former naval officers and landowners, were pivotal figures in Scottish evangelicalism.

<sup>4</sup> The multi-volume standard History of Church of Scotland Parishes and Ministers.

presented to the Parish of Boyndie near Banff on the Moray Firth coast by the Earl of Seafield who had had, as tutor, Francis Nicoll, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1830, at the age of 22.

While at Boyndie he had his troubles and some triumphs. He told an acquaintance that he would never have been a minister of the Established Church of Scotland had he not known of the changes about to come. In 1831 an elder resigned because he declined to abandon the habit of profane swearing. In 1841 he visited 208 families and held twenty-eight catechisings at which 580 people attended. Sabbath schools were held at the Manse, at Cairnton and at Whitehills, villages in the Parish where, incidentally, a Methodist Church had been founded after the missions of James Turner in 1840. At the Disruption in 1843 all but one of his elders followed him into the Free Church. The one loyal to the Established Church was John Wilson, the Laird's factor, who later sent his son to the Gymnasium – the Chanonry School's familiar name.<sup>5</sup>

The Andersons moved out of their newly built manse into two fishermen's cottages in Whitehills. In 1845 they removed to Old Machar in the shadow of the Church of Scotland Cathedral in Old Aberdeen where eventually a wooden Free Church<sup>6</sup> was opened by Thomas Chalmers.

Already influenced by Baptist teaching, Anderson spent a sabbatical of six months of 1847 in the British Museum researching baptism. In 1848 he was 'excommunicated' by the FC, not without arguments in Assembly and in print. He began meeting with supporters in Ross's Hall in George Street, and a small church continued there until 1877. In the same year, he bought, from Professor John Forbes of the Chair of Oriental Languages in King's College, Old Aberdeen, the school in Old Aberdeen, known later as the Chanonry School or the Gymnasium. He was substantially helped in this venture by his younger brother James, who was a clerk in a London shipping office and later bought Frognaal Estate in Hampstead, and by Alexander MacDonald, a pioneer of the granite industry in Aberdeen who was a member of the Scotch Baptist Church<sup>7</sup> in South Silver Street (later Academy Street). His wife and three daughters became members of the George Street Church.

The subsequent story of the George Street Church is fragmentary. It was described, in the 'Crown Terrace Bazaar Book' of 1909, as 'less aggressive than Crown Terrace but more deeply instructed' so that the two

<sup>5</sup> Dr A.A. Cormack 'Alexander Anderson' Banffshire Journal, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1956.

<sup>6</sup> The name by which the Disruption Church was and is known. Hereafter FC.

<sup>7</sup> The Scotch Baptists were distinguished by having several lay pastors, weekly communion and suspicion of an educated ministry. Their main theologian was Archibald Mclean (1733-1812), see David Bebbington (ed.) *The Baptists in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1988).

churches were seen as complementary on their union in 1878, when Anderson was feeling the effects of age. During the ministry of Clarence Chambers, father of Oswald Chambers, the well known author of *My Utmost for His Highest*, from 1866 to 1877, the two churches, John Street which moved to Crown Terrace (its present home), in 1870, and George Street had grown closer and 'they even held United Communion Services'.<sup>8</sup> In the Crown Terrace Church's Minute Book for 5<sup>th</sup> June 1878 are the 'Articles of Union between the Church Meeting in Crown Terrace and the Church at 208 George Street'. They are:

- 1 The United Church is to understand that there is nothing in the Constitution of either of the uniting Churches which is an obstacle to Christian freedom. The Bible shall be our only standard and Christ the only Head.
- 2 The United Church will not be liable for separate legal obligations, and will have the privilege to co-operate for the maintenance of Public Ordinances and generally in promoting the cause of Christ.
- 3 Dr Anderson is to be the Honorary Pastor.
- 4 The conduct of affairs will be in the hands of the deacons of both churches for three months.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1878 there was a joint church meeting at which Dr Anderson was invited to be the Honorary Pastor. Dr Anderson died in Aboyne on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1884, and his memorial stone is in the Churchyard of St Machar Cathedral, Old Aberdeen. I assume that his pastorate in Crown Terrace was quite nominal.

In the list of members of Crown Terrace in 1878 all members of the United Church are listed and no distinction is made. The Law family, still prominent in the Church, and the Gibb family, from whom came the Revd Grant Gibb were also from George Street.

One tantalising glimpse of Anderson's more extended ministry is recorded in the 'Baptist Reporter and Missionary Intelligencer' for 1855:

Montrose<sup>9</sup> - on 7<sup>th</sup> July last Mr Anderson, Pastor of George Street in Aberdeen, baptized 5 disciples, 2 males and 3 females in the baptistry of the church here. They were all intelligent members of the Independent Church in Sauchieburn,<sup>10</sup> 8 miles from here (Montrose), the pulpit of which has been supplied freely by Mr Johnston, Mill of Kincardine (since the decease of their late minister) who being a Baptist has been the means of directing the attention of many to the scripture baptism by

<sup>8</sup> Centenary Brochure of the Free Communion Baptist Church, Crown Terrace, Aberdeen (Aberdeen, 1939) p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> A port on the East Coast of Scotland, some 30 miles south of Aberdeen.

<sup>10</sup> Sauchieburn is still a tiny village about 30 miles south of Aberdeen.

immersion of believers, and half the members have now submitted to the ordinance. There is a prospect of obtaining a missionary in connection with the Baptist churches of Arbroath, Montrose, Luthermuir and Bervie.<sup>11</sup>

This deserves notice for several reasons. The Pastor at Montrose (from 1812 until 1866) was James Watson, brother of Jonathan Watson, first President of the Baptist Union of Scotland, whose alleged Arminianism caused some controversy when attempts were made to unite Scottish Baptists in the 1820s. He and his church were received into the Scottish Baptist Association<sup>12</sup> in 1840, and Francis Johnston records that Calvinistic Baptists in Montrose worshipped with the Independents. Presumably, given his Presbyterian background, Anderson was Calvinistic, although his published works do not mention that particular controversy. Certainly he merged his George Street Church with the Open Communion Church in Crown Terrace.

The church at Sauchieburn had an interesting history. The building, which still stands in private grounds in the village, housed the Berean congregation, the parishioners of Fettercairn who followed their assistant minister, John Barclay, when he was refused a certificate of character by the Presbytery in 1773, a refusal endorsed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He was accused of obstructing the peaceful settlement of the newly appointed minister of Fettercairn and some 1000 people followed him out of the Kirk. His particular views of assurance, as an essential fruit of faith, and of revelation as a direct act of God, unmediated by human reason, were the ostensible grounds of his removal from parish ministry. The Berean church continued in Sauchieburn and, after a division, also in nearby Laurencekirk until 1809, when James McRae, Barclay's nominee to Sauchieburn, retired and was succeeded by Thomas McKinnon, a minister of the Congregational Union of Scotland. He died in 1854, which is the date Dr W. McNaughton in his *The Scottish Congregational Ministry* (1993), gives for the demise of Sauchieburn Congregational Church, and it must be the remnants of this body who provided baptismal candidates in Montrose in the following year.

In the reminiscence section of *Spirat Adhuc Amor*, one former pupil describes, in a wealth of flowery and allusive early twentieth century prose, the experience of attending George Street Hall, which seems to have been compulsory for boarders on Sunday evenings. In the morning boys were allowed to attend St Machar's Church of Scotland Cathedral or the FC, but

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<sup>11</sup> 'Baptist Reporter and Missionary Intelligencer', vol. 29, 1855, p. 339.

<sup>12</sup> A short-lived precursor of the present Baptist Union of Scotland.

whatever their background, they worshipped as Baptists at the end of the Sabbath!

For our Sunday Evening service we were all taken to the 'Hall', a big room in George Street which the Govie (the affectionate nickname of the Principal or Governor) rented, and in which he ministered to a congregation of Baptists. On rare occasions a stranger would officiate. Everybody must remember well the arrangement of the hall. The greater part of the space was reserved for the congregation. We boys sat in a bunch in the front seats close to the pulpit. Under the lamp, says a Persian proverb, there is darkness, and under the preacher's eye we consumed sweets with perfect impunity....generally we kept good order, for the reason that we knew there were eyes on us from the family pew at the back of the room. The rest of the space was behind a curtain which stretched across the Hall, and this Beyond was a sanctuary which no boy's foot had ever profaned or eye seen. It was said to contain a bath in which the rite of baptism was administered to adults, and it was generally a region of exaggerated mystery.

It was a mystery to us... how our revered Head could have convinced himself that the discourses he delivered could be of practical benefit to us. They were ever the same theorisings on the Covenants, Old and New, and on the elements of the former that could be construed as 'types and symbols' of things to come.....he never sought to obtrude Baptist tenets. The sermons were full of Typology.

The unfortunate boys were expected to make notes on the sermon and to hand them over to the Govie back at the school. There were also twice daily prayers except on a Thursday when there was a more extended diet called the Prayer Meeting, which was the weekly service at the Hall over again, and of course grace before and after dinner.<sup>13</sup>

Shewan lists, so far as he was able to ascertain, details of all the boys who attended the school, 1535 in total, and gives some idea of their careers. Many became teaplanter in India and Ceylon, many went into commercial occupations, there were numerous doctors and teachers, and no less than fifty-nine became ministers, mostly of the Established and Free Churches, and seven Baptists, only six of whom I have discovered in the list.

1. Alexander Bissett, who became FC minister at Rhynie and Peterhead, and then as a Baptist ministered at Whyte's Causeway, Kirkcaldy in Fife, Gilcomston Park, Aberdeen, and Alexandria near Glasgow, dying in 1909.
2. Alexander Grant Gibb from Crown Terrace Church, a day boy from 1874-8. After working in the family firm for six years he studied

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<sup>13</sup> Shewan, *Spirat Adhuc Amor*, pp. 163-167.



science at the University of Aberdeen from 1889-90 and then attended New College (the FC Theological Hall) in Edinburgh from 1890-92. He was minister of Limerick Baptist Church in Southern Ireland from 1892-1901 and was President of the Baptist Union of Ireland in 1897. In 1902 he settled in Gilcomston Park, Aberdeen, and was President of the Scottish Baptist Union, 1928-9. He was a bachelor, which may account for the comment, 'has travelled much in Europe'.

3. Arthur Mursell. 'Was a master at school for some time, and afterwards Minister of the Baptist church and a well known public lecturer'. He was at Grosvenor Road, Manchester, at the same time as Alexander Maclaren,<sup>14</sup> was in Union Chapel and later in Birmingham. He, and his father James, also a Baptist minister in Leicester, were well-known for supporting radical causes.
4. William James Packer, a day boy in 1872 and a Master for a while. He was at Bristol Baptist College in 1875 and 'Pastor in various places'. He went to Sutton in Ashfield in 1901 and was still there in 1906.
5. William Henry Perkins, a boarder in the early 1850s and a Baptist Minister at various places. From 1898 he was pastor of Rosebery Park Baptist Church, Boscombe, and was still there in 1906.
6. Frederick Perkins, Baptist Minister at Bilston Staffordshire and Farringdon, Berkshire. In 1870 he retired through ill-health from hard study.

The last four were all from England, and the school, set up to attract the sons of landed gentry and prosperous tradesmen, drew its pupils from several countries, and was known at one point as the Rugby of Scotland. There was a Japanese pupil who was the last survivor of 'a cult founded by one Harris of which Laurence Oliphant was a prominent member'.<sup>15</sup>

Dr Anderson also employed assistant masters, some of whom went on to great careers. Stewart Salmond, afterwards Principal of the FC College, and Archibald Kennedy, who became Professor of Hebrew in Aberdeen, are only two of an interesting group. The school sought to balance classical, modern, scientific studies with sport and moral instruction. There were some distinguished alumni. Two Earls of Caithness, one of whom became the Treasurer of the Episcopal Church of St Paul in Aberdeen, centre of the Drummondite schism, and a son of the Earl of

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<sup>14</sup> First President of the Baptist World Alliance.

<sup>15</sup> Oliphant (1829-1888) was a Scottish aristocrat, war correspondent and traveller who for some years was devoted to the Brotherhood of New Life, founded in the United States by Thomas Lake Harris.

Erroll were pupils. Soldiers and colonial governors and judicial officers, both in Scotland and in the Colonies were educated there.

Sir William Ramsay, author of *St Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, was, with Herbert Grierson, Professor of English Literature in Aberdeen and then in Edinburgh, among the most celebrated, or successful, ex-pupils. Two names intrigue me, G.G. Cameron, possibly one of a line of four generations of George Gordon Camerons in the Church of Scotland ministry, the third of whom was my neighbour and benefactor in Glenburn, Paisley, the first church I served, and George Reith, a day boy from 1859-60, who may be the Reith who was educated mainly at Aberdeen Grammar School, and whose son was Lord Reith.<sup>16</sup>

There is further information about the Chanonry House School in *Education in Aberdeenshire before 1877*. When it opened there were scholarships of £5 per year provided by friends of the school. After 1851 Dr Anderson built up the boarding section of the school as large as the day school, and a few boys were still educated free. The fees were 5-10 guineas for day boys and 45-60 guineas for boarders. Official reports noted that the school had helped to raise educational standards of students matriculating in the universities of Aberdeen. Special instruction was given for the entrance examination of the Indian Civil Service and Woolwich Military Academy, and a class in Civil Engineering was recognised by the Secretary of State for India. Unusual attention was paid to sport and there were two extensive playgrounds.<sup>17</sup>

Dr Anderson published a number of pamphlets. The first was a sermon published in 1836 while he was still a minister of the Establishment. It was entitled 'The Popery of Protestantism' and was preached in Buckie, a large fishing town on the Moray Firth coast, and published 'for behoof of the Buckie Chapel'. It was occasioned by the excitement caused by the recent visit to Buckie of Mr Shanks, missionary of the Reformation Society. The text was 2 Thessalonians 2v7: 'already the secret forces of wickedness are at work'. 'Popery', he proclaimed 'is nothing else than the religion of unregenerate man, fully carried out and reduced to a system after the workings of Satan and the instrumentality of misguided and designing men.' But, he says, there is a correspondence between certain leading principles in the Romish system of doctrine and false views of religion by which mankind in their natural state are governed. There is undue reliance on human authority. We need certainty

<sup>16</sup> Shewan, *Spirat Adhuc Amor*, pp. 331-434. Lord Reith (1889-1971) was the distinguished first Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

<sup>17</sup> *Education in Aberdeenshire before 1877*. Published by the Scottish Council for Research in Education, vol. XXV, 1947. There is a reference to Dr Anderson's visit to Dresden to study Gymnasias in James Scotland, *History of Education in Scotland*, vol.1 (London, 1969), p. 262.

especially as regards the safety of the soul, and should turn to the infallible testimony of the Word of God, but in our natural indolence we do not. Protestants have tendencies to split the church, as did the Christians in Corinth. If, in the Roman Catholic Church, priests are seen as mediators, so unbelieving Protestants transfer the responsibilities of true religion to another.

Nominal Protestants in the hour of their death cherish the imagination that the prayers of their ministers are to prove helpful to their salvation, independently of any change to be effected in their character by divine grace. Papists may have their superstitions, but are not many nominal Protestants to be found with the outward professions of devotion, partaking in the solemnities of the communion Sabbath? Parents evince a nearly universal concern to have their children baptised and in itself surely this is superstition.<sup>18</sup>

He has a footnote on the ‘christening’ of boats and ships, ‘to a high degree dishonouring to the God of ordinances.’<sup>19</sup>

Thus, we see here that early in his work Anderson is uncomfortable with the concept of a national inclusive church, and we can detect the seeds of his later moves to the Free Church and then to Baptist principles.

In 1848 a sermon on Hebrews 2v11 entitled the ‘Unity of Christ and His People’ was published in the ‘Free Church Pulpit’, but in the same year he was excommunicated – that is the word used – from the FC because of his Baptist principles. He did not go quietly. In a pamphlet reviewed in the Baptist Magazine for 25 April 1848 he states:

1. I propose to believe and offer to prove – that according to the intimations of Old Testament Scripture a change was destined to be effected on the character of the church considered as a visible community under the New Testament and that from being composed of mere carnal elements and embracing the whole of a natural race, on the condition of their conformity to an outward ritual, it is the will of God that under the Gospel, the church collectively and every individual member of it shall be distinguished by a character of visible spirituality.
2. Accordingly God has under the New Testament by increased communication of the Holy Spirit’s influence to his people, provided that they shall possess a measure of joy, love and purity, setting a visible difference between them and nominal Christians.
3. The Apostles accordingly formed churches uniformly on the principle that all members should be distinguished by a visible spirituality.

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<sup>18</sup> Alexander Anderson, ‘The Popery of Protestantism’ (Aberdeen, 1836).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Then he argues against infant baptism as a seal of interest in the covenant of grace previously obtained. Gentiles do not share in the covenant of grace sealed with Abraham, and children of believing parents, being baptised, often appear as the children of flesh, not children of God. Infant Baptism should lead to infant communion etc. And baptism should be by immersion, although the mode has no importance in itself. It should be a fit symbol to represent Christian privilege and truth, and the union with Christ in His Death and resurrection. Sprinkling or effusion (sic) was introduced only for the sick and dying. He points out that the vote in favour of sprinkling at the Westminster Assembly was a majority of one. The review remarks that neither the statement nor the review makes a heavy demand on time or the purse.<sup>20</sup> One other Baptist contribution by Anderson was an introduction to the 1852 edition of Archibald McLean's, 'Review of Wardlaw's'<sup>21</sup> Lectures on the Abrahamic Covenant'.

Dr Anderson also wrote, in 1859, a large pamphlet on 'The Scottish University System', subtitled 'The Problem of Reconciling the Elevation of its Standards with the Maintenance of its Public Utility'. He agrees, with Chalmers, that the Scottish education system is weak throughout, and he is especially unhappy with boys coming to university straight from country schools. That is one reason why he studied the German Gymnasium system and curriculum and accounts for the secondary name of his school. He aimed to provide an intermediary stage, a middle school, between the village dominie and the university. Here is one illustration he gave. 'It is no long time since the Greek Professor began the session with the teaching of the alphabet – now, in King's College<sup>22</sup> a student must commence his course with a respectable acquaintance with the Greek as implied in the translation and parsing of a book of Xenophon's *Anabasis ad aperturam*. In Marischal College a competent knowledge of arithmetic is required before the Maths Class and a knowledge of three books of Euclid.' As Aberdeen had two separate universities until the 1860s, he campaigns for a union of resources, with the Junior curriculum in the 'spacious and conveniently situated Marischal College and more grave and advanced students finding their appropriate retreat in the quiet and academic precincts of Old Aberdeen - King's College'.

Anderson's academic interests were extensive, as was his ability to address a wider public. In 1874 he published 'Science, Theology and Religion, with Notices of the Teaching of Professor Struthers and others'. Struthers was Lord Rector of Aberdeen University and Professor of

<sup>20</sup> Baptist Magazine (London, April 1848).

<sup>21</sup> Dr Ralph Wardlaw (1779-1853) was a noted Scottish Congregationalist theologian.

<sup>22</sup> Until they were united in 1860, Aberdeen boasted two universities, King's College, founded in 1495, and Marischal College, founded in 1593, after the Reformation.

Anatomy there, and the pamphlet deals with various matters of faith and science. Anderson seems to be open to a certain interpretation of the theory of evolution and believes that true theology must take cognisance of the science of nature. Darwin, he writes, 'stops with at least an implied acknowledgement of the creative agency of God'. But he puts a caveat on the suggestion that man's animal frame is developed from primordial origins. He also makes a plea for the medical education of women, which was, as we shall see later, a subject close to his heart. He also attacks those who condemn homeopaths, who are 'as learned and skilful and successful as their orthodox opponents'. He has an interesting comment on other faiths: 'for the more reflective and intelligent of Hindoo worshippers there are religious beliefs the moral influence of which is salutary'.

In 1883, when he was an old man, he wrote a 'Contribution towards the determination of the Date of the Lord's Last Supper' which seeks to harmonise the Synoptic account with that of John, and which he solves to his satisfaction, having entered a private communication with Dean Ellicot on the subject.

### **Dr Anderson's family<sup>23</sup>**

Dr Anderson married first Mary Gavin, daughter of Dr Alexander Gavin of Strichen in 1831, who died in 1864; and secondly, in 1868, Mrs Marion Nesbitt who died in 1901. By his first wife he had twelve children. The eldest died as an infant, but all the rest grew up and had, in some cases, quite exceptional offspring:

1. Alexander Gavin Anderson, b 1833, emigrated to New Zealand, but returned, and one of his daughters, Dame Adelaide Mary was a high-ranking civil servant in England and became the first Her Majesty's Chief Lady Inspector of Factories from 1897-1921.
2. Frances Anne, b 1835, married Henry Barker, Anderson's second in command at the Gym.
3. Mary Adamson, b 1837, was a pioneering woman doctor, and gained an MD in Paris in 1879. She practised in London and Cannes. She married the lawyer Claude Marshall, the brother of her step-mother.
4. James George Skelton, b 1838, became a shipowner in London in the company Anderson and Anderson, which became the Orient and latterly the P and O Line. He married, in 1871, Elizabeth Garrett,

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<sup>23</sup> This family information comes from

Myweb.tiscali.co.uk/jrghibbert/f/free/anderson/john%20anderson%201.htm.com accessed 20 May 2011, and from ODNB articles on Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Eric Geddes and Aukland Geddes.

who was a pioneer of women's medicine in England. She was refused entry to University courses but passed the examination of the Society of Apothecaries in London and became a licentiate in 1865. She gained an MD in Paris in 1870 and is remembered by the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for Women. She was mayor of her home town, Aldeburgh, from 1908-1909.

5. John Ford, b 1840. MD Aberdeen 1863 and MRCP<sup>24</sup> London in 1926 at the age of 86! He practised medicine in Hampstead, London.
6. Margaret Jane, b 1841, married Archibald Stevenson of the Jarrow Chemical Works, South Shields. Of their children, one was Major-General Alexander Gavin Stevenson ADC<sup>25</sup> to King George V, and another, May Margaret, OBE,<sup>26</sup> was one of the principal officers in the WAAC<sup>27</sup> during the Great War.
7. Jemima, b 1842, married Johan August Westerberg of Gothenberg.
8. William Richard, b 1844, became a partner in the shipping company.
9. Charlotte Elizabeth, b 1848, married John Clarke who was a later headmaster of the Gym, then lecturer in education in Aberdeen and a Town Councillor.
10. Andrew Thomson, b. 1849, unmarried. He worked in the family shipping firm, then as a tea-planter in Ceylon.
11. Christina Helen, b 1850, married her cousin, Acland Campbell Geddes in 1871, whose father came from South Ronaldsay. He was a civil engineer, amongst other feats draining the Corstorphine Loch where Murrayfield stadium now stands.

Their eldest daughter, Alexandra, married Douglas Chalmers Watson, an Edinburgh doctor who branched out into turkey farming in East Lothian – I think the family is still there. He was Doctor at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh. She also graduated in medicine, MD in Edinburgh 1898, the first woman to do so, and set up a joint practice with her husband. Margaret, her third daughter, was an Edinburgh Town Councillor.

Christina's eldest son, Sir Eric Geddes, was MP for Cambridge University 1917-1922, and First Lord of the Admiralty at the end of the Great War. He was first chairman of Imperial Airways, the forerunner of British Airways.

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<sup>24</sup> Member of the Royal College of Physicians.

<sup>25</sup> Aide de Camp.

<sup>26</sup> Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

<sup>27</sup> Women's Auxiliary Air Corps.

Her second son Auckland, was Professor of Anatomy at McGill University who in 1942 became Lord Geddes of Rolvenden. Previously as Sir Auckland Geddes he was minister of National Service 1917-1919. He was British Ambassador to Washington from 1920-1924, and Chairman of Rio Tinto, the mining conglomerate. He was appointed regional commissioner for civil defence in the south-east region in 1939. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography mentions that he worked with R.B.Haldane<sup>28</sup> – a distant relative.

Irvine Campbell, her youngest child became chairman of the family shipping firm.

In himself and in his descendants, Alexander Anderson was a remarkable man, and as a convert to the small number of Scottish Baptists in 1848, and a pastor for thirty years thereafter, he deserves to be remembered.

**The Revd Dr Derek B Murray**, is an IBTS Research Supervisor.

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<sup>28</sup> Descendant of the evangelist James Haldane, and Lord Chancellor of England in the 1920s.

## Book Reviews

### *History of Estonian Ecumenism*

Riho Altnurme (ed.)

The Estonian Council of Churches/University of Tartu, 2009, 635 pages.

Published, both in Estonian and English, to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Estonian Council of Churches, this weighty volume is both a history and an encyclopaedia, including, for example, a 22-page chronology of the actions of the Council from 1989, a 60-page biographical lexicon, a formidable bibliography, and some translated documents. One thing lacking, however, is a map to make sense of the geography.

Historically the major concentration is on the period since 1989 when the Council of Churches was founded, but there are also helpful chapters on church relationships from 1900 to the outbreak of the Second World War, and on how the churches co-operated in periods of Nazi and Soviet control. That depth of history is important for it underlines the dependency of the Lutherans on the German language – still the language for Old Testament teaching in the seminary as late as 1933, and the Orthodox on Russian. Language, race and politics all became intertwined in these relationships, with the roots of the conflict between the Estonian-speaking Orthodox, appealing to the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Russian speakers, owing obedience to the Moscow Patriarch, shown to date back to the 1920s. Similarly the identification of the Lutherans, not simply the churches of the Hanseatic trading communities, as essentially Teutonic in association made for difficulties. Accordingly this account of ecumenical relations also introduces the reader to the religious history and tensions of the Estonian nation.

Ecumenical activity in Estonia reflected what was happening in Europe generally with networking around the three foci of Life and Work, Faith and Order and the International Missionary Council, with ‘World International Friendship through the Churches’ having a particularly high profile. Fruitful conversations between Baltic Lutherans and the Church of England provoked some fears about relations with a church with a strong catholic presence at the expense of existing ties with fellow Lutherans in Germany. At the same time the Orthodox also entered into conversations with the Church of England, in part as a means of establishing their independence of the Moscow Patriarchate. Such conversations, as also those seeking to set up a united Baltic Orthodox Church, embracing the churches in Finland, Estonia and Latvia, came to nothing but in 1923 the



Estonian Church was granted extended autonomy by the Ecumenical Patriarch. Whilst there was both co-operation and conflict between Lutherans and Orthodox, relations with Roman Catholics were compromised by the Vatican promotion of uniatism [Eastern Rite Catholics] which was perceived as a form of proselytism.

The Free Churches tended to be critical of both Orthodox and Lutherans as offering formal civic religion without deep mission commitment, whilst contrariwise they were often seen as invading canonical territory and as proselytisers, whose congregations did not deserve the title of churches. In some localities, however, there were good relations. Within their own life the older Free Churches were challenged by the emergence of Adventism and Pentecostalism, which attracted away some of their members. Renewal of pietism in the Lutheran church and the development of the European Evangelical Alliance helped to build more positive relations within Estonia as well as linking Estonian Free Churchmen to external intelligence and support. Attempts to bring the Baptists and Revivalist Church together were unsuccessful notwithstanding much common understanding. In like measure they failed to set up an association of Free Churches even though there were good personal relationships across denominational boundaries, and from time to time it was necessary for the free churches to combine in common action such as joint endeavour to defend the legality of marriages in their churches. Other areas of co-operation included mission, education, work with young people, and social work.

Looking at the statistics, it is difficult to compare like with like. Whereas the Lutheran church, often regarded as the nation's major religious interest [78% of the population], only claims 180,000 members and the autocephalous Orthodox Church in Estonia claims 27,000, and the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate claims 200,000 members. Or again, whereas the Roman Catholic Church claims 6,000 members with 13 clergy in 9 congregations, the Baptist/Free Evangelical churches claim a similar membership but with 88 pastors in 83 congregations: birth membership indicated by infant baptisms indicate a different form of membership from that based on an adult commitment. The council also includes Methodist, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist and the Charismatic Episcopal Church.

In the final part, with chapters on such topics as the Media, Religious Education, the Sociology of Religion Crime Prevention, Values and Ethics, and Youth Work, an analytical approach is more obvious.

This is a comprehensive volume full of valuable information but also providing significant exploration of the way in which communities of faith

related to one another in a diversity of political contexts to which our Baptist colleague, Toivo Pilli, has made a notable contribution.

**John Briggs**

Research Professor in Baptist History, IBTS, Prague

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***The 'Plainly Revealed' Word of God? Baptist Hermeneutics in Theory and Practice***

Helen Dare and Simon Woodman (eds.)

Mercer University Press, Macon, Georgia 2011, 293 pages.

ISBN 978-0-88146-237-1

Baptists claim to be a people of the book and to engage in a congregational reading of the Scriptures together. From the 1644 Particular Baptist Confession through to the 2005 Baptist World Alliance Centenary Message, when we have been asked to explain ourselves to others we say we take the Bible seriously and seek to model the life of the believing community on Scripture.

In 2009 South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff, held a colloquium of Baptist scholars, principally from the isles, but including others from mainland Europe, the USA and Australia, to explore the state of Baptist hermeneutics in the twenty-first century. The book is dedicated to the late Dr David S Russell CBE, who, retaining an active engagement within biblical scholarship, especially Old Testament and Apocalyptic literature, realised the importance of application, which he rendered in a lifetime of service to Baptists worldwide, but perhaps especially to those who suffered under communist oppression in Eastern Europe in the later part of the twentieth century.

The dedication to David Russell is appropriate as he certainly held together high scholarship and active discipleship. Being a collection of papers from a colloquium, inevitably we miss the sense of interaction which surely occurred amongst an important group of Baptist scholars, though several of the participants in their chapters seek to draw together disparate strands, and this is very helpful.

The book is divided into five sections. The first section featuring chapters by Mikeal Parsons, Alan Culpepper, Paul Fiddes and Rex Mason, reviews aspects of Baptist biblical scholarship in the latter part of the twentieth century. The second section explores how Baptists have used the Bible in worship, Bible study material and community life, with

Christopher Ellis, Simon Perry and Rex Mason providing fascinating and important insights.

A wider focus is provided in section three by Ian Birch, Parush Parushev and John Colwell, reflecting more on the theological context and describing and analysing what sort of communities develop primary theology and practices out of a particular way of reading the Bible.

Of course, not all Baptists in each generation have read the Bible and interpreted it in quite the same way. Simon Woodman, Helen Dare and Sean Winter look at issues of reading the Bible together, even when we disagree. The final section offers papers by Brian Brock and William John Lyons on a wider perspective.

Overall, a very important volume exploring a key contemporary topic and a vital addition to any reading list on Baptist identity and ecclesiology.

**Keith G Jones**  
Rector, IBTS, Prague

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### ***Francis Johnson and the English Separatist Influence***

Scott Culpepper

Mercer University Press, Macon, Georgia 2011, 261 pages.

ISBN 978-0-88146-238-8

Francis Johnson was pastor of the English Separatist Ancient Church in London and Amsterdam from 1592 to 1618 and, as such, was a key figure in the debate and search for the 'True Church', being influential on both John Robinson and John Smyth, which led to the development of congregational and baptistic communities in the United Kingdom and the United States. He was central to the development of the covenanted theology of several dissenting traditions, though his own life and church was full of contradictions.

Johnson is classically referenced in many standard works on the period, but until now has lacked a modern account of his work and examination of his theology, apart from a place within Barrington R White's 'The English Separatist Tradition from the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers' (1972). Scott Culpepper has rectified this omission in this scholarly, helpful and thought-provoking book based on his doctoral thesis.

Johnson hailed from Richmond, North Yorkshire, which raises an immediate sense of affinity from this reviewer. He studied in the Free Grammar School and from there matriculated to Christ's College, Cambridge in 1579, graduating BA, then MA in 1585. Whilst at Cambridge he imbibed the current Puritan radicalism of the university.

Culpepper narrates Johnson's life in a helpful way, being sure to set the background scene with some care. He helps us understand how Johnson inclined to a Presbyterian church polity, but later moves towards a more congregational and Anabaptist ecclesiology. This intellectual journey in search of the 'True Church' is carefully explored and helpfully analysed, giving us clues as to how others who engaged with Johnson developed their own thinking. The very nature of the journey led to casualties along the way including his father and brother.

Johnson learned partly from experience, by trying out radical ideas, often leading to disagreement with others, but the nature of the quest was never in doubt. By 1591 Johnson was engaged with the Separatist church in London, already having turned his back on the established church into which he had been baptised at St Mary's, Richmond, in 1562.

Culpepper explores in some detail why John Smyth, who had been close to Johnson, did not unite with the Ancient Church when Smyth and his friends moved to Amsterdam, where Johnson and his church were by 1608. Johnson believed in a strong eldership and careful control of the congregation because of earlier disputes. Smyth appeared not so constrained and looked to the Anabaptist practice regarding baptism and, as we know, ended up a Mennonite.

This excellent work, exploring primary resources, unravels some of the mysteries of those tumultuous times in search of the 'True Church'.

The book is highly commended.

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